Meeting Packet
(May 18, Work Planning Session & May 19, Regular Business Meeting) 
2022

Spokane, Washington

“To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington, in collaboration with conservation districts and partners.”
**Strategic Planning Session**

**Agenda for May 18, 2022 (8:30am-3:30pm)**

**Outcomes:** 1) Establish actions already completed to implement our long-range strategic plan, 2) Forecast and plan for budget/capacity needs, and 3) Define meaningful outcomes/stories of impact to track during 2022-2027

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<tr>
<td>1 8:30</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>• Opening comments</td>
<td>Chair Daryl Williams</td>
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<td>• Roll call</td>
<td>Executive Director Chris Pettit</td>
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<td>2 8:40</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>• Review intended outcomes for today and moving forward</td>
<td>Laura Meyer and Chris Pettit</td>
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<td>• Present a) change in culture/process for plan implementation and reporting, and b) opportunity to</td>
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<td>define stories/outcomes from each priority area that advance our communications strategy, legislative</td>
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<td>approach, and ability to demonstrate program impacts and public benefits.</td>
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<td>• Review agenda</td>
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<td>3 8:55</td>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>Priority Area: Voluntary Conservation of Natural</td>
<td>I. Presentation: Status report – progress so far and what’s on-deck</td>
<td>Jon Culp</td>
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<td>II. Presentation: Forecasted budget/capacity needs</td>
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<td>III. Presentation and discussion: Outcomes/impact stories we need to tell and associated metrics to track</td>
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<td>4 9:30</td>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>Priority Area: Climate Resilience</td>
<td>I. Presentation: Status report – progress so far and what’s on-deck</td>
<td>Alison Halpern</td>
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<td>5 10:05</td>
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<td>BREAK</td>
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<td>6 10:15</td>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>Priority Area: Agricultural and Working Lands Viability</td>
<td>I. Presentation: Progress/status report</td>
<td>Kate Delavan</td>
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<td>and Food System Support</td>
<td>II. Presentation: Forecasted budget/capacity needs</td>
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<td>III. Presentation and discussion: Outcomes/impact stories we need to tell and associated metrics to track</td>
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| 7     | 10:50    | 35 min Priority Area: Governance and Accountability | I. Presentation: Progress/status report  
II. Presentation: Forecasted budget/capacity needs  
III. Presentation and discussion: Outcomes/impact stories we need to tell and associated metrics to track | Shana Joy                     |
| 8     | 11:25    | 35 min Priority Area: Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration | I. Presentation: Progress/status report  
II. Presentation: Forecasted budget/capacity needs  
III. Presentation and discussion: Outcomes/impact stories we need to tell and associated metrics to track | Ron Shultz                    |
| 9     | 12:00    | 60 min LUNCH BREAK                          |                                                                                  |                               |
| 10    | 1:00     | 60 min Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act overview | • Presentation: AAG’s Office will provide a session overview for commissioners on the OPMA and Public Records Act. | Matthew Kernutt, Assistant Attorney General |
| 11    | 2:00     | 30 min Priority Area Reflections and Next Steps | • Each priority area lead summarizes and confirms key take-home messages and next steps resulting from today’s discussions | Jon, Alison, Shana, Ron, and Kate |
| 12    | 2:30     | 15 min BREAK                                |                                                                                  |                               |
| 13    | 2:45     | 30 min Issues of interest                  | • Open discussion of other relevant topics Commissioners wish to bring to the table. | Chair Williams                |
| 14    | 3:15     | 10 min Wrap up                             | • Review / confirm any actions for 5/20 business meeting                         | Laura                         |
| 15    | 3:25     | 5 min Closing                              | • Closing comments                                                              | Chair Williams, Executive Director Pettit |
| 16    | 3:30     |                                            |                                                                                  |                               |

Conservation Commission Meeting
May 18 & 19, 2022
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May 18, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Laura Meyer, Communications Director

SUBJECT: 2022-2027 Strategic Plan – Priority Area Reports

Summary:
Staff has prepared reports/presentations and discussion topics for the May 18 Conservation Commission Strategic Planning Session with the intent to 1) Establish actions already completed to implement our long-range strategic plan, 2) Forecast and plan for budget/capacity needs, and 3) Define meaningful outcomes/stories of impact to track during 2022-2027.

Requested Action (if action item):
Information only

Staff Contact:
Laura Meyer (lmeyer@scc.wa.gov, 360-701-9455)

Background and Discussion:
The Conservation Commission approved the final priority areas and goals for our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan in Dec. 2021. Since then, staff leads and teams assigned to each priority area have been:

1. Tracking work completed between Jan.-Apr. 2022 that contributes to approved goals;
2. Preparing for tactics that must be launched or completed by the end of this calendar year;
3. Referring to the strategic plan to forecast additional capacity/budget needs for the 2023-2025 biennium in order to stay on track; and
4. Continuing to build out detailed action plans (objectives, strategies, tactics) associated with each goal.

Staff leads from each priority area have prepared reports (see Attachment A) that provide an overview of goal status, 3-5 highlights of completed tactics, 3-5 examples of tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022, and examples of forecasted capacity/budget needs for the 2023-25 biennium.
Working drafts of each priority area action plan are attached to this memo (see Attachment B). Action plans are still in progress. We aim to complete them by July 2022.

Before finalizing action plans, we want to ensure we’ve set ourselves up to track and report meaningful impact stories and public benefits. Establishing the strong stories/benefits we aim to report will help inform the objectives in our final action plans and identify the appropriate data and metrics we need to track.

At the Strategic Planning Session on May 18, priority area leads will seek Commissioner feedback on 1-2 ideas of impact stories per priority area. There are multiple stories we can and will tell, but we want to leverage the partnerships and expertise of our Commission members to really sharpen 1-2 impact stories per priority area that we must tell effectively.

**Recommended Action and Options (if action item):**
Information only

**Next Steps (if informational item):**

- Referring to Commission feedback / discussion from the May Strategic Planning Session, staff will finalize action plan details for our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan by July 2022.

- Staff will explore strategic plan implementation tools/platforms to will help us streamline how we track and report on our progress.

- Staff will conduct a review of our annual/biennial report and explore ways to effectively align the framework with our strategic plan.
## Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources – Status Overview

(lead: Jon Culp)

### Goal I: Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat

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### Goal II: Protect and improve water quality and availability

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### Goal III: Protect and improve soil health

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### Goal IV: Improve forest and rangeland health on private land

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### Goal V: Strengthen awareness of natural resources’ value and conservation opportunities

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Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources – Summary

Highlights of tactics launched or completed to date (Jan. 1-Apr. 30, 2022):

- Secured significant increase in funding during 2022 Supplementation Session for riparian restoration and salmon recovery work.
- Staff has been working with Ecology state and regional staff to complete a list of adjudicated basins where stock water reserves have been set aside. Once complete, districts working in those basins can continue to cost share on exclusionary fencing for water quality goals.
- Staff has implemented amendments to the IEGP program policy that promotes irrigation demand reduction through the implementation of irrigation efficiencies projects in drought vulnerable basins.
- SCC continues to assist Okanogan conservation district with developing grant application to Ecology’s water banking pilot program.
- WA Grown video featuring Benton CD that we paid to produce aired during episode of WA Grown show in March 2022; it’s already reached thousands of households, and it’s been shared with legislators, NACD members, and Congressman Newhouse.

Examples of priority tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022 (if applicable):

- Design and launch an effective process to administer, track, and report impacts of the additional riparian/salmon funding we received.
- Explore additional incentives to bolster CREP based on Oregon model.
- Survey conservation districts to develop budget needs to implement irrigation water management planning technical assistance by August 2022.
- Coordinate/write at least three articles featuring CDs for the new WA Grown monthly magazine and coordinate/produce one video segment featuring Columbia CD’s VSP work for the WA Grown show (airs 2023).

Brief description of key additional capacity / funding needs in next biennium (if applicable):

- Staff anticipate additional capacity and funding is necessary to support the SCC’s natural resource conservation programs.
# Climate Resiliency – Status Overview (lead: Alison Halpern)

**Goal I: Equip producers and land stewards to strengthen adaptive management strategies to successfully adapt to a changing climate**

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**Goal II: Increase carbon sequestration**

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**Goal III: Decrease greenhouse gas emissions**

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**Goal IV: Increase stakeholder understanding about climate-smart practices and holistic co-benefits**

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**Goal V: Strengthen the ability of our natural and working landscapes and communities to prepare for and respond to drought, wildfire, food, and other climate-related hazards**

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Climate Resiliency – Summary

Highlights of tactics launched or completed to date (Jan. 1-Apr. 30, 2022):

- SFF draft programmatic guidelines are out for review
- FY23 supplemental budget contains $2M to launch SFF
- April issue of Wheat Life features SFF

Examples of priority tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022 (if applicable):

- SFF programmatic guidelines need to be adopted
- Online application form needs to be developed
- SFF program manager needs to be hired and trained
- SFF program needs to be launched in July

Brief description of key additional capacity / funding needs in next biennium (if applicable):

- An SFF program manager will need to be hired to coordinate the program
- Fiscal may need additional support to manage SFF contracts – especially with other public entities
### Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food System Support – Status Overview

*(Lead: Kate Delavan)*

#### Goal I: The SCC is a trusted and knowledgeable partner in advancing working lands protection and agricultural viability across Washington

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#### Goal II: Working lands are available for future generations

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#### Goal III: Maintain water supply for agriculture

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#### Goal IV: Economically viable farms, farmland, and strong local and regional food systems

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Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food System Support – Summary

Highlights of tactics launched or completed to date (Jan. 1-Apr. 30, 2022):

- Staff are currently working with the Okanogan Conservation District on the viability of conservation district led water banks in headwater basins.
- Staff are participating in Ecology led drought discussions. SCC successfully added resiliency work into the State Drought Contingency Plan.
- Building on presentations to the Center for Latino Farmers and a Continuing Legal Education workshop with the Washington State Bar Association in 2021, staff continued to build out resources for farm transition and succession planning. Staff presented on “Planning the Future of the Farm” at two workshops hosted by conservation districts. The recordings are available on the OFP website.
- SCC offered a small grant program to conservation districts to support local efforts to build resilient food systems, support agricultural viability, and connect consumers to locally produced food.
- Staff are facilitating deeper engagement among existing partnerships and helping to create new partnerships across land protection agencies to leverage limited resources to protect working lands. Staff represent SCC and conservation district interests in several key groups including:
  - State Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group
  - Arid Lands Initiative
  - Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative
  - WDFW Monitoring Group and implementation of riparian management zones
  - Farmland Preservation Roundtable

Examples of priority tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022 (if applicable):

- SCC received funding in the supplemental Capital budget for a new agriculture conservation easement program: Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA). Staff worked with a coalition of stakeholders in support of FPLA. Staff are currently working to develop program guidelines with a plan to launch the program in the summer 2022.
- Guided by SCC Policy 19-02, SCC is seeking funding for three agricultural conservation easement projects developed by conservation districts in the 2022 WWRP Farmland application cycle.
- The 23-25 legislative session provides an opportunity to expand eligible areas for the Irrigation Efficiencies Program.

Brief description of key additional capacity / funding needs in next biennium (if applicable):

- Staff anticipate additional capacity and funding is necessary to support the SCC’s working lands protection program, farmland succession and transition resources, and the water resources programs.
## Governance and Accountability – Status Overview *(Lead: Shana Joy)*

### Goal I: The SCC Board and agency operates legally, transparently, accountably, and inclusively

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### Goal II: A fully engaged and representative Commission board

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### Goal III: Conservation district boards represent their community

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### Goal IV: Conservation districts operate legally, transparently, accountably, and inclusively

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### Goal V: Conservation district boards are well-supported to achieve their mission

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Governance and Accountability – Summary

Highlights of tactics launched or completed to date (Jan. 1-Apr. 30, 2022):

- Secure IT professional capacity on staff.
- Form and support a WSCC and WACD joint elections committee to further discussion around potential improvements to CD elections.
- Evaluate available tools for website effectiveness and new information delivery methods.
- Ensure quality technology available to support remote access/participation for SCC staff, districts, partners and the public.
- Review, evaluate and update, as needed, reporting forms for SCC funding.

Examples of priority tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022 (if applicable):

- Staff will annually review and update as necessary, SCC policies and procedures. (e.g. Grants & Contracts Procedure Manual)

Brief description of key additional capacity / funding needs in next biennium (if applicable):

- Capacity limitations of current staff necessitate completing some tactics/projects prior to taking on new tactics/projects.
- Refilling vacancies is essential for staff capacity limitations relief.
- Some funding support may be needed for contractor work on specific tactics; as work on tactics evolves this will become clearer.
Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration – Status Overview *(Lead: Ron Shultz)*

### Goal I: Earn and maintain the trust of partners and decision-makers

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### Goal II: Demonstrate leadership in voluntary conservation resulting in innovative natural resource solutions that work

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### Goal III: Cultivate a broad and inclusive culture of conservation

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### Goal IV: Foster collaborative, holistic, multi-benefit solutions for natural resources and agriculture

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Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration – Summary

Highlights of tactics launched or completed to date (Jan. 1-Apr. 30, 2022):

- Partners have been engaged in the development of the 2023-25 funding requests.
- WSCC executive director has begun meetings with key state and federal agency leaders and key decision makers.
- Biennial report completed – report on effectiveness and efficiency of our delivery systems.
- Success stories communicated to partners – example WA Grown.
- Funding secured for Farmland Protection and Land Acquisition program.
- Obtained funding for an agency equity assessment. Assessment implementation through FY22 (by June 2023).

Examples of priority tactics that must be launched or completed by Dec. 31, 2022 (if applicable):

- Agency equity assessment implementation through FY22 (by June 2023).
- Engaging with partners as we develop 2023-25 decision package requests.
- Engagement with stakeholders and Congressional delegation on Farm Bill.
- Identification of opportunities for CRM establishment and engagement.
- Facilitation of stock water issues must be completed by Dec 2022.
- Increase outreach and engagement with Tribes.

Brief description of key additional capacity / funding needs in next biennium (if applicable):

- Policy staff support to assist in improving outreach capacity, setting meetings and tours, and provide additional support for engagement on policy issues.
- Resources needed to support database system improvements.
- Additional staff capacity to assist with outreach and engagement with Latino farmer organizations and Tribes.
- Additional staff capacity needed to assist in CRM coordination.
Priority Area Section:

- Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources
- Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food System Support
- Climate Resiliency
- Governance and Accountability
- Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration

Priority Area: Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources

I. Goal: Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat

Objective: Increase implementation of voluntary actions and solutions to benefit fish and wildlife habitat

Strategy: Strengthen CD capacity to employ effective models and tactics that increase the miles/acres of riparian buffer planted through CREP, NRI, Shellfish, RCPP, and other voluntary programs.

- Tactic: [with existing CREP program?]
- Tactic: Develop programmatic guidelines for the implementation of Non-CREP funding appropriated by the Leg. in 2022 using project management principles, by X date.
- Tactic: [with existing NRI program?]
- Tactic: [with existing Shellfish program?]
- Tactic: [with existing RCPP program?]
- Tactic: [how can we capitalize on the existing CTA program to strengthen cd capacity?]
- Tactic: [additional incentives to bolster CREP based on Oregon model for 2022.]

Commented [CJ(1)]: Is this additional funding for TA? or FA. Maybe some examples of what the Oregon model is or specifics.
Strategy: Support CD efforts to improve successful fish migration and spawning, such as through removing passage barriers, constructing in-stream habitat, enhancing streamflow, and replacing non-compliant fish screens.

- Tactic: Explore the decision package to increase state funding for NRI from $___ to $____
- Tactic: Explore additional funds for CTA...
- Tactic: market IEGP policy changes to targeted districts not participating in the program, but whose long range plans indicate the need for program implementation.
- Tactic: Market IEGP technical staff from SCC to work with CTD and individual districts to determine and meet conservation district training needs for water conservation practices.

Strategy: Promote opportunities to engage with CDs in fish/wildlife activities and achievements made through this work.

- Tactic: [e.g., social media campaign]
- Tactic:

Objective: Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for fish and wildlife and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.

- Strategy: Engage in policy discussions with federal (USFWS, etc.), state (WDFW, etc.), and tribal agencies on fish and wildlife enhancement. Disseminate results with conservation districts

  - Tactic: SCC representation on Office of Columbia River Policy Advisory Group, communicate relevant messaging to conservation districts and ask districts for input on group discussion topics.
  - Tactic: Continue SCC communications with WDFW’s Water Science Team on fish habitat monitoring across the state.

- Strategy: Collect and disseminate social science information to various decision making entities and processes

  - Tactic: [e.g., Send x number staff to Community-Based Social Marketing training]
  - Tactic: [e.g., staff participate on social science group....]
✓ Tactic: [specific way we'll develop a monitoring method for a particular resource issue (e.g., fish habitat)]
✓ Tactic: Collect trust water effectiveness monitoring reports from WDFW’s Water Science Team and disseminate to conservation districts relative to their IEGP projects.
✓ Tactic: [specific way we’ll develop a monitoring method for a particular program (e.g., VSP)].

Strategy: Connect decision-makers, partners, and other stakeholders with information on results and return-on-investment of voluntary fish and wildlife conservation work
✓ Tactic: [e.g., CREP fact sheet]
✓ Tactic: [e.g., communication strategy/piece for VSP]
✓ Use trust water monitoring data from the WDFW Water Science Team in IEGP factsheet and/or other marketing tools, annually prior to Legislative Session

Objective: Increase landowner voluntary compliance with local land-use planning

Strategy: Provide financial incentive through the VSP program
✓ Tactic: decision package to increase district capacity to implement VSP activities with eligible landowners in participating counties.
✓ Tactic: increase district capacity to implement the VSP program by increasing funding from $_____ to $_____.
✓ Tactic: increase the number of participating districts/counties from x to x.

II. Goal: Protect and improve water quality and availability

Objective: Increase Implementation of voluntary actions and solutions to benefit water quality

Strategy: Increase conservation district capacity to complete nutrient management plans/projects.
✓ Tactic: increase CTA funding from $_____ to $_____ 
✓ Tactic: increase Livestock TA funding from $_____ to $_____ 
✓ Tactic: Explore decision package to increase NRI funding from $_____ to $_____ 
✓ Tactic: increase Shellfish funding from $_____ to $_____
Strategy: Increase conservation district capacity to complete irrigation water management plans.

- Tactic: Survey conservation districts to develop budget needs to implement irrigation water management planning technical assistance by August 5, 2022
- Tactic: Explore adding an irrigation water management budget for CD capacity and proviso language to the IEGP decision package in 2022.

Strategy: Increase conservation district capacity to achieve state and local water quality goals.

- Tactic: Amend and market implementation of the IEGP to address water quality conservation projects by July 1, 2022
- Tactic: SCC to work with conservation districts and state partners to provide a list of basin and sub-basin water rights adjudications that set aside a stock water reserve so that districts can continue to fence cows out of creeks by July 1, 2022.
- Tactic: SCC to work with conservation districts and state partners to provide a list of basin instream flow rules with stock water exemptions so that districts can continue to fence cows out of creeks by July 1, 2022.
- Tactic: SCC to work with interested parties to identify a statewide path forward so that conservation districts can continue to work to achieve state and local water quality goals by fencing cows out of creeks.

Objective: Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for water quality and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.

- Strategy: Engage on policy discussions with federal (EPA, etc.), state (ECY, etc.), and tribal agencies on water quality. Disseminate results with conservation districts
  - Tactic: [specific water quality group engagement]
  - Tactic: SCC continue to engage with conservation districts, legislators, state agency partners, and stakeholders with in-stream or out-of-stream needs, to achieve stock related water quality goals.
- Strategy: Collect and disseminate social science information to various decision making entities and processes
  - Tactic: [specifics]
Objective: Increase implementation of voluntary actions and solutions to benefit water availability

- Strategy: Strengthen CD capacity to voluntarily engage participants with programs and activities that conserve water, such as Irrigation Efficiencies and NRI.
  - Tactic: Provide funding for technical assistance to conservation districts and producers to conserve water resources
  - Tactic: Increase state funding for CTA from x to x by x
  - Tactic: Increase state funding for NRI from x to x by x

- Strategy: Strengthen CD capacity to voluntarily engage participants with activities related to drought resiliency and response.
  - Tactic: Explore sources of state or federal funding and offer increased technical assistance for local drought resiliency and response planning (e.g., CTA, NRCS)
  - Tactic: Promote and fund local drought contingency planning
  - Tactic: SCC to provide technical assistance and resources to conservation districts in order to enhance local drought planning opportunities that help inform the state’s drought contingency plan and address local drought vulnerabilities.
  - Tactic: Explore amendments to the IEGP decision package and budget proviso language that promotes irrigation demand reduction through the implementation of irrigation efficiencies projects in drought vulnerable basins.

Objective: Office of Farmland Preservation to create an agricultural water bank program and assist districts in developing and managing local water banks

- Strategy: Provide technical assistance to conservation districts for the creation of a local water bank to ensure adequate water supply for agriculture
  - Tactic: SCC staff to provide basic water rights assessments and water rights technical assistance to districts interested in beginning a local agricultural water bank.

- Strategy: Fund conservation districts to develop and manage a local water bank
  - Tactic: SCC to assist conservation districts with developing grant applications to Ecology’s water banking pilot program
Tactic: Explore decision package for the cost of administering a local agricultural water bank and purchase water rights.

Strategy: Fund conservation districts to educate irrigators about the protection of water rights

Tactic: Explore decision package or amending language for the IEGP decision package to train and fund conservation district staff to perform basic water rights assessments with local irrigators.

Objective: Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for water availability and drought mitigation/response and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.

Strategy: Engage in policy discussions with federal, state, and tribal agencies on water resources, drought mitigation, and drought response. Disseminate results with conservation districts.

Tactic: SCC participate in the state’s Water Resource Advisory Committee

Tactic: SCC participate in the state’s Water Supply Availability Committee

Tactic: SCC engage with Ecology’s Water Banking Pilot Program staff

Strategy: Collect and disseminate social science information to various decision making entities and processes related to water resources/drought

Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this]

Objective: Demonstrate impacts of voluntary conservation and the efficacy of these actions on achieving goals for water quality and availability.

Strategy: Develop and implement monitoring methods to better track and adaptively manage voluntary water quality and availability work.

Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this for water quality]

Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this for availability]

Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this for drought]

Strategy: Connect decision-makers, partners, and other stakeholders with information on results and return-on-investment of voluntary water quality and availability work

Tactic: Finalize and promote video produced by NxNW/WA Grown that features Benton CDs’ work to improve water quality and availability (airs 2022).
III. **Goal: Protect and improve soil health**

- **Objective:** Increase implementation of voluntary practices that improve soil health, such as through water holding capacity, pollutant filtering, nutrient cycling, air quality and physical stability.
  - **Strategy:** Support CD capacity to voluntarily engage participants with soil health activities.
    - **Tactic:** [submit decision package to increase CTA…]
    - **Tactic:** *e.g., pursue additional funding for program that funds these type of practices*
  - **Strategy:** Engage in policy discussions with federal, state, and tribal agencies on soil health. Disseminate results with conservation districts

- **Objective:** Demonstrate impacts of voluntary conservation and the efficacy of these actions on achieving goals for soil health.
  - **Strategy:** Develop and implement monitoring methods to better track and adaptively manage results on voluntary soil health.
    - **Tactic:** *specific way we’ll do this for soil health*
  - **Strategy:** Connect decision-makers, partners, and other stakeholders with information on results and return-on-investment of voluntary soil health work

- **Objective:** Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for soil health and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.
  - **Strategy:** Engage in policy discussions with federal, state, and tribal agencies on soil health. Disseminate results with conservation districts
    - **Tactic:** *e.g., specific soil health group we’ll participate on*
  - **Strategy:** Collect and disseminate social science information to various decision making entities and processes related to soil health

IV. **Goal: Improve forest and rangeland health on private land**

- **Objective:** Increase implementation of voluntary conservation practices that enhance the health of private forests
  - **Strategy:** Build CD capacity to voluntarily engage people with activities that benefit forest health.
✓ Tactic: [Pursue decision package to increase CTA]
✓ Tactic: SCC explore opportunities to partner with NRCS for EQIP funding for prescribed fire implementation through CDs on private lands.

Objective: Increase implementation of voluntary conservation practices that enhance the health of rangeland

- Strategy: Build CD capacity to voluntarily engage people with activities that benefit rangeland health.
  ✓ Tactic: [Pursue decision package to increase CTA]
  ✓ Tactic: SCC explore opportunities to partner with NRCS for EQIP funding for prescribed fire implementation through CDs on private lands.

Objective: Demonstrate impacts of voluntary conservation and the efficacy of these actions on achieving goals for forest and rangeland health.

- Strategy: Develop and implement monitoring methods to better track and adaptively manage results on forest/rangeland health.
  ✓ Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this for forest health]
  ✓ Tactic: [specific way we’ll do this for rangeland health]
- Strategy: Connect decision-makers, partners, and other stakeholders with information on results and return-on-investment of voluntary forest and rangeland work.

Objective: Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for forest and rangeland health and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.

- Strategy: Engage in policy discussions with federal, state, and tribal agencies on forest and rangeland health. Disseminate results with conservation districts.
  ✓ Tactic: SCC staff participate on Shrubsteppe Proviso Committee and Shrubsteppe Communications Committee.
  ✓ Tactic: [specific forest health engagement/committee]
  ✓ Tactic: SCC staff participate on Washington Prescribed Fire Council
  ✓ Tactic: [specific rangeland health engagement/committee]
Strategy: Collect and disseminate social science information to various decision making entities and processes related to forest and rangeland health.

V. Goal: Strengthen awareness of natural resources’ value and conservation opportunities.

Objective: CDs have increased ability and success with marketing their services and value.

- Strategy: Gain better understanding of CD marketing/communication needs
  - Tactic: Reach out to CPO group for feedback
  - Tactic: Potential CD survey?

- Strategy: Pursue ways to build CD marketing/communication capacity.
  - Tactic: Submit decision package for increased CTA funding (2023-25?)
  - Tactic: Facilitate monthly meetings of the CPO group
  - Tactic: Maintain and grow Marketing Toolkit based on identified marketing needs.

Objective: Increase K12 student and adult access to CD education services, including place-based, environmental, and agricultural education opportunities.

- Strategy: Support opportunities for CD educators to connect and share resources
  - Tactic: Contract with CD staff person to serve as CD Educator Coordinator who will facilitate quarterly meetings of the CD Educator Group, share education resources, and keep lines of communication open between CD educators

- Strategy: Explore potential funding opportunities for CD Education efforts
  - Tactic: [decision package? Either through CTA or stand-alone]
  - Tactic: [CD Educator Coordinator assists CDs with grant applications?]

- Strategy: Strengthen collaborative communication and understanding about Washington’s priorities for environmental/place-based education and how partners, including conservation districts, can effectively work together to achieve them.
Tactic: CD Educator Coordinator invites guest speakers/attendees to quarterly CD Educator meetings.

Objective: SCC connects more decision-makers, partners, and communities with effective stories and facts about voluntary conservation and its value.

- Strategy: Develop and implement strategies/products that highlight the role of voluntary conservation in achieving the state’s priorities.
  - Tactic: Publish and disseminate biennial reports for SCC and CDs.
  - Tactic: Gather and share success stories of CDs’ voluntary role in conserving/enhancing riparian habitat (2022).

- Strategy: [Capture/tell story of value of CTA]
  - Tactic: [Revise CTA reporting form in order to capture efficient/effective information and successes]
  - Tactic: Develop one-pager on CTA accomplishments/ongoing needs (Fall 2022).

- Strategy: Pursue ways to connect urban, suburban, and other communities/demographics traditionally not as aware of CDs/voluntary conservation with stories of their value.
  - Tactic: Partner with NXNW studio to produce short video featuring CDs to air on WA Grown in urban/suburban communities across state.
  - Tactic: Partner with CTD to develop “Conservation Catalog” project.

- Strategy: Increase SCC social media presence and engagement
  - Tactic: Develop and implement plan to expand SCC social media presence in 2022.

Priority Area: Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food Systems Support

I. Goal: The SCC is a trusted and knowledgeable partner in advancing working lands protection and agricultural viability across Washington.

Objective: Increase capacity for SCC and conservation districts (CDs) to engage in federal, state, local, and other agency management plans, policy making, and programming.
Strategy: The SCC will facilitate deeper engagement among existing partnerships and help create new partnerships across land protection organizations to leverage limited resources to protect working lands.

- Tactic: Represent SCC interests in State Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group
- Tactic: Represent SCC interests in Arid Lands Initiative
- Tactic: Engage with other agencies when land acquisitions are planned to encourage an active management and working lands ethic for acquired lands.
- Tactic: Represent SCC/CD interests in Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative
- Tactic: Support conservation district participation and coordination in the DNR Forest Health Advisory Committee.
- Tactic: Represent SCC and CD interests in WDFW Monitoring Group and implementation of riparian management zones.
- Tactic: Represent SCC and CD interests in Farm Bill discussions related to working lands and food systems.
- Tactic: SCC and the CDs work in partnership with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs to foster opportunities for veterans to pursue careers in agriculture/conservation.

Strategy: SCC supports land-use policies that provide protections for working lands.

- Tactic: Track and educate stakeholders on relevant state legislation affecting working lands.
- Tactic: Provide technical assistance to conservation districts engaging in local planning efforts (e.g. Comprehensive Plan updates, no net loss policies for agricultural land, etc.) to protect working lands
- Tactic: Support successful implementation of Voluntary Stewardship Program
- Tactic: Participate in statewide policy development through discussion with agencies and the legislative process

II. Goal: Working lands are available for future generations.

Objective: SCC assists in the completion of agricultural and forestland conservation easements.

- Strategy: OFP will pursue funding for the SCC’s farmland preservation account.
Tactic: SCC will explore development of a decision package to fund the SCC’s farmland preservation account and increase OFP staff capacity to implement the new program.

Tactic: SCC will engage with stakeholders for stakeholder interest in seeking funding for the account.

Strategy: The SCC will act as project sponsor and easement holder for WWRP farmland and forestland preservation projects developed by conservation districts.

Tactic: OFP will seek funding from the WWRP Farm and Forest Account for priority farmland, rangeland, and forestland preservation projects recommended by the conservation easement subcommittee.

Strategy: The SCC will support conservation districts to build staff capacity and expertise for working land protection projects.

Tactic: OFP will connect conservation districts to land trusts working in their service areas.

Tactic: SCC will provide technical and financial assistance on new working lands protection transaction models to advance conservation district priorities (e.g. Healthy Forest Reserve Program)

Tactic: SCC will explore opportunities to support forestland protection via conservation easements.

Tactic: OFP will act as a convener, facilitator, educator, and connector through the OFP newsletter, the Farmland Preservation Roundtable, and local or regional groups/networks.

Tactic: SCC will provide financial support and leadership to the RCPP Easement Liaison position.

Tactic: SCC will support additional financial and leadership partnership opportunities with NRCS to improve and expand ACEP-ALE implementation in Washington.

Objective: OFP expands statewide land access and succession planning programming.

Strategy: OFP will encourage coordination and communication between existing programs.

Tactic: The Farmland Preservation Roundtable will be a forum for coordinating efforts on land access and succession planning.

Tactic: Succession and estate planning resources will be shared on the OFP website and shared via the OFP newsletter.
Tactic: SCC will work through the Food Policy Forum on policies and funding opportunities to support land access and succession planning programming.

Tactic: OFP will explore development of a decision package for funding support for land access and succession planning programming. Deliverables may include an update to the Planning the Future of the Farm workbook.

Objective: OFP advances innovative tools for farmland protection and land access.

- Strategy: SCC will work through the Food Policy Forum on policies and funding opportunities that support farmland protection and land access.
  - Tactic: In addition to acting as a co-convener, SCC is an active participant in Food Policy Forum discussions and provides resources to inform consensus recommendations.

- Strategy: OFP supports development of model provisions for conservation easements to ensure affordability and promote land access.
  - Tactic: OFP will convene stakeholders to solicit feedback and identify potential tools.
  - Tactic: SCC will identify ways to cover legal costs – AAG or funding request.

- Strategy: SCC supports development of new land access tools/programs such as low-interest loans for conservation entities to facilitate Buy-Protect-Sale transactions.
  - Tactic: OFP acts as a program adviser to the newly created FarmPAI program at the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.
  - Tactic: OFP explores other potential mechanisms for resources to facilitate land access.

Objective: The SCC and conservation districts are leaders and strong partners supporting the economic viability of forest and rangelands.

- Strategy: Engage in opportunities to support working forests and rangelands as economic drivers in their local communities.
  - Tactic: Engage in opportunities to bring additional forest and rangeland management tools into more widespread use in Washington such as prescribed grazing or prescribed fire.
  - Tactic: Interact with conservation districts, Department of Commerce, and other partners as appropriate to support vital community infrastructure necessary to keep working forest and
rangelands working such as workforce development efforts, mills, meat processors, and feed stores.

III. Goal: Maintain water supply for agriculture.

Objective: The SCC supports CDs in minimizing conflict between water users in water-short basins.

- Strategy: Commission will offer an irrigation water management technical assistance program.
  - Tactic: Seek funding for conservation district staff.
  - Tactic: Seek funding for soil moisture monitoring equipment.
- Strategy: Commission will have a financial assistance program (Irrigation Efficiencies Program).
  - Tactic: Seek funding for conservation district staff capacity to implement Irrigation Efficiencies Program.
  - Tactic: Seek funding for landowner financial assistance for irrigation projects.
  - Tactic: SCC will develop a budget proviso that expands eligible areas for implementing the Irrigation Efficiencies Program in the 23-25 session.

Objective: The SCC supports CDs in planning for and implementing water banking and other efforts to secure water resources for agriculture.

- Strategy: Commission will have a technical assistance program to support conservation districts to develop water banks.
  - Tactic: SCC to provide conservation districts with funding and training opportunities on water banking under RCW 90.42.
- Strategy: SCC will provide water rights technical assistance to conservation districts.
  - Tactic: SCC will offer training on the use of the Trust Water Rights Program as a “parking lot” for agricultural water rights against relinquishment.
  - Tactic: SCC will continue to stay current with water law, case law, and policy around water resources in the State and share updates with conservation districts.
  - Tactic: SCC will work with districts to do an initial assessment of water rights on properties proposed for conservation easements.

Commented [JL/S]: Will need to coordinate with Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources – this is flagged in that priority area, too
Strategy: SCC will offer technical or financial assistance for groundwater conservation or replacement.

- Tactic: SCC will engage with Grant County Conservation District regarding the Odessa Groundwater Project.

Strategy: SCC will assist conservation district on drought resilience activities.

- Tactic: SCC will seek drought resiliency funding.

IV. Goal: Economically viable farms, farmland, and strong local and regional food systems.

Objective: The Food Policy Forum is a critical component of our state’s food system, assisting in the resolution of issues in the delivery of food to critical areas, and assisting our state’s farmers in their engagement in the food system at various levels.

- Strategy: Support continued facilitation of the Food Policy Forum in partnership with the Washington State Department of Agriculture.
  - Tactic: Maintain or expand SCC financial support for the Food Policy Forum

- Strategy: Keep conservation districts up to date on Food Policy Forum activities and opportunities to engage.
  - Tactic: Share information via GovDelivery and other forums.

Objective: More consumers are aware of how to access local food.

- Strategy: SCC supports conservation districts in connecting consumers to the food system through education.
  - Tactic: SCC will explore funding and opportunities for coordination with WSU Extension and other agencies.
  - Tactic: SCC will share resources and tools to help conservation districts engage with farmers in reaching local consumers.

- Strategy: Support conservation districts on market support programs (e.g. web based marketing platforms, farm to market connections).
  - Tactic: SCC will share resources and tools to help conservation districts engage with farmers in reaching local consumers.

- Strategy: Partner with WSU Extension and other agencies on education and training opportunities for consumers.
Tactic: SCC will explore funding and opportunities for coordination with WSU Extension and other agencies.

Strategy: SCC supports conservation districts in improving equitable access to locally produced food.

Tactic: SCC will explore providing technical and financial assistance to conservation districts in supporting community agricultural activities such as community gardens, gleaning, and programs to increase access to locally grown food.

Objective: More conservation districts are able to engage in activities to support local farm viability.

Strategy: Support conservation districts on infrastructure support programs (e.g. meat processing, equipment rental (manure spreaders, no-till drills), and transportation improvements (e.g. grain transporter truck to rail)).

Tactic: SCC will explore funding sources for technical and financial assistance.

Tactic: SCC will coordinate with WSDA and WA Meat Up and share information with conservation districts.

Tactic: SCC shares resources and tools to help conservation districts operate infrastructure support programs. Potential platforms for resource sharing include hosting webinars, networking groups, and web forums. Explore opportunities for partnership with CTD.

Objective: SCC supports conservation districts in providing resources for small-acreage farms, urban agriculture, and rural landowners.

Strategy: SCC will explore additional CTA funding.

Tactic: Conservation districts provide technical assistance and education on key habitats (e.g. pollinator habitat).

Strategy: SCC will engage with partners on small-acreage farms and urban agricultural needs.

Tactic: SCC participates in emerging conversations on Urban Agriculture (USDA Urban Ag, NACD Urban Ag).

Tactic: SCC participates and facilitates discussions with partners regarding small-acreage and urban-agriculture.
Priority Area: Climate Resiliency

I. Goal: Equip producers and land stewards to strengthen adaptive management strategies to successfully adapt to a changing climate

- Objective: Increase Conservation District capacity to assist producers and land stewards to adapt to changing climate.
  - Strategy – The SCC will facilitate deeper engagement among existing partnerships and help create new partnerships with universities, agencies, and others to increase district knowledge and expertise
    - Tactic - explore decision package to increase district training and access to tools
    - Tactic - capacity – climate scientist/agronomist or bring those experts (UW, WSU, etc.) to CTD
  - Strategy: Increase educational opportunities for Conservation District about the impacts of climate on crop management and how to adjust crop types, crop rotation, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) based on changing climate conditions
    - Tactic – coordinate with CTD re: climate change modeling, increased access to modeling tools
  - Strategy – Increase communication and coordination of SCC programs around climate change and adaptive management
    - Tactic – incorporate questions relating to climate change resiliency/planning in SCC grant programs…. SCC collects meaningful information
    - Tactic – develop communication strategy to better engage landowners about climate change using surrogate topics of economic viability and co-benefits of practices

- Objective: Increase stakeholder knowledge about the impacts of climate in natural areas and how to adjust management approaches.

II. Goal: Increase carbon sequestration

- Objective: Promote conservation practices that increase carbon sequestration
- Objective: Financially incentivize carbon sequestration
III. Goal: Decrease greenhouse gas (CO2 equivalent) emissions

Objective: Promote conservation practices that decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

IV. Goal: Increase stakeholder understanding about climate-smart practices and holistic co-benefits

Objective: Increase awareness about co-benefits of climate-smart practices (give examples of co-benefits)

Objective: Coordinate and enhance interagency integration of climate-related activities

V. Goal: Increase wildfire, drought, and flooding resiliency of Washington’s natural and working landscapes and communities

Objective: The SCC and conservation districts are strong partners working to improve forest / rangeland health and community wildfire resiliency.

Objective: Conservation districts are supported in their work to improve forest and rangeland health and community wildfire resiliency.

Priority Area: Governance and Accountability

I. Goal: The SCC Board and agency operates legally, transparently, accountably and inclusively.

Objective: Increased quality and quantity of data compiled in CPDS to support reporting and demonstrating resource needs.

> Strategy: Explore additional data collection and visualization tools to compliment CPDS so we can collect and tell the entire story of district work.

✓ Tactic: Explore methods for importing data into CPDS from other databases and sources.
Tactic: Ensure that CPDS is compatible for use with other tools we may use internally such as GIS.

Tactic: Explore how appropriate forest health project data from CPDS could be efficiently extracted for upload into DNR's Forest Health Tracker.

Strategy: Explore functionality of common data compilation tools used by Districts for improvements to CPDS.

Tactic: Conduct outreach to gauge use of CPDS, identify barriers to using CPDS, desired functionality, and other tools in use.

Tactic: Encourage increased data entry of all project work into CPDS by Districts.

Objective: Successfully complete regular financial audits performed by the State Auditor’s Office.

Strategy: Ensure preparedness for financial audits.

Tactic: Annual review and update as needed of internal financial policies and procedures.


Tactic: Provide training opportunities for staff on up to date financial management and accounting practices and procedures.

Objective: SCC is in compliance with all applicable and current governance and operations policies.

Strategy: SCC will ensure complete policies and procedures are in place for Commission operations and governance.

Tactic: Staff will at least annually review, identify, and incorporate new requirements into policies and procedures.

Strategy: SCC Commissioners and staff will maintain awareness of and uphold governance and operations policies and procedures.

Tactic: Staff will annually review and update as necessary, SCC policies and procedures.

Tactic: Commissioners will annually review and update as necessary, SCC policies and procedures.

Objective: SCC conducts all agency operations in an open, transparent manner.
Strategy: SCC will continuously improve our website and information delivery methods for increased transparency.

- Tactic: Secure IT professional capacity on staff.
- Tactic: Evaluate available tools for website effectiveness and new information delivery methods.

Strategy: Work to continuously improve effectiveness and efficiency of reporting for SCC programs and funding.

- Tactic: Review, evaluate and update, as needed, reporting forms for SCC funding.

Strategy: Explore continued use of technology to increase participation in Commission meetings and hosted events.

- Tactic: Provide the option for remote participation access for Commission meetings, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Tactic: Ensure quality technology available to support remote access/participation for SCC staff, districts, partners and the public.

Strategy: The SCC implements and adaptively manages programs and grants in close communication with conservation districts.

- Tactic: Include conservation districts in efforts to update, modify, or craft SCC grants and programs for districts.
- Tactic: Create and maintain an open dialogue with conservation districts about grant and program management efficiency.
- Tactic: Establish a deliberate process for review of BMP/program environmental effectiveness.

Strategy: The SCC will improve internal document and records management systems.

- Tactic: Explore additional or new tools for records and document management to further facilitate staff working in multiple locations.

Strategy: SCC annually evaluates the need for new agency policy or rules.

- Tactic: Complete rules on removal of CD Supervisors in conjunction with adoption of agency policy around investigation of CD supervisors.

Objective: SCC seeks to operate in an environmentally mindful manner.

- Strategy: SCC will explore ways to reduce carbon emissions of our agency operations.
  - Tactic: Encourage teleworking and commute trip reduction options for staff.
Tactic: Source and support locally produced products for meals/snacks with SCC sponsored meetings.

Tactic: Environmentally mindful packaging and waste will be utilized for meals/snacks with meetings.

Tactic: Printing and document production will be done in an environmentally mindful way.

II. Goal: A fully engaged and representative Commission board.

Objective: Commission members are well informed and prepared to engage.

- Strategy: Support training and professional development opportunities for Commissioners.
  - Tactic: Survey Commissioners for desired training and professional development opportunities.
  - Tactic: Develop a formal orientation for new Commissioners.
  - Tactic: Develop training plan for Commissioner professional development.

- Strategy: SCC governance policies are current and comprehensive.
  - Tactic: Complete Governance Sub-committee work to establish SCC governance policies.
  - Tactic: Review SCC governance policies at least every other year for necessary updates to be made.

- Strategy: SCC staff will ensure that timely and accurate information is prepared and provided to Commissioners.
  - Tactic: Commission meeting packets will be made available to Commissioners at least 1 week prior to scheduled meetings unless circumstances require otherwise.

Objective: Commissioner positions are a sought after service opportunity.

- Strategy: Promote opportunity to serve as a Commissioner to conservation districts and member agencies.
  - Tactic: Complete an evaluation of SCC board composition.
  - Tactic: Conduct outreach about the benefits and responsibilities of serving as a Commissioner.

Objective: SCC and Commission meetings are a place to bring and resolve natural resources challenges.
Strategy: Commission meetings are structured to support more in-depth discourse on hot topics.

- **Tactic:** Evaluate agenda setting and overall Commission meeting structure for potential improvements.
- **Tactic:** Ensure public comment is encouraged, with appropriate parameters, prior to final Commission action.
- **Tactic:** Clarify SCC staff role during Commission meetings: how can staff add value to discussions. **Tactic:** Inviting other agencies or partners to make presentations on key issues before the Commission.
- **Tactic:** Establish a process to queue up hot topics for Commission meeting discussion/presentation.

### III. Goal: Conservation district boards represent their communities

**Objective:** CD boards have no vacancies and vacancies are promptly filled.

- **Strategy:** SCC share resources and information with CDs to help them engage with under-represented segments of their communities.
  - **Tactic:** Gather and share demographic data or other relevant community data.
  - **Tactic:** Seek out connections with under-represented groups across the state and facilitate connections with local CDs.
- **Strategy:** Promote public participation with and awareness of conservation districts.
  - **Tactic:** Conduct statewide advertising and outreach of CD elections procedures and opportunity.
  - **Tactic:** Conduct statewide advertising and outreach of CD appointment procedures and opportunity.
  - **Tactic:** Encourage CDs to utilize associate supervisors.

**Objective:** SCC conducts a robust CD supervisor appointment process.

- **Strategy:** Increase public awareness of opportunity to serve as a CD appointed board member.
  - **Tactic:** Conduct statewide advertising and outreach of CD appointment procedures and opportunity.
- **Strategy:** Implement a robust CD board member appointment process.
  - **Tactic:** Evaluate current appointment process.
Tactic: Establish more comprehensive, transparent, appointment process policies and procedures.
Tactic: Establish an oath of office for appointed CD board members.

Objective: SCC provides CD elections’ rules, procedures and oversight.

- Strategy: Explore potential changes for improvement to CD elections.
  - Tactic: Foster communication and understanding between SCC and CDs and others around CD elections.
  - Tactic: Implement as appropriate the WSCC/WACD Joint Committee on Elections recommendations.
  - Annually evaluate conservation districts’ elections processes for potential improvements.

IV. Goal: Conservation districts operate legally, transparently, accountably and inclusively.

Objective: All CDs meet requirements in CAPP Accountability Standards each year.

- Strategy: CAPP requirements are clear, relevant, and reflect current requirements.
  - Tactic: RMs review and update CAPP Accountability Standards on an annual basis.
- Strategy: CDs are aware of legal, transparency, and accountability requirements for district operations.
  - Tactic: RMs interact with the Districts to utilize CAPP.
- Strategy: SCC staff ensure accountability of public funds utilized by the conservation districts through appropriation to the SCC.
  - Tactic: RMs interact with the Districts to conduct implementation monitoring visits.
  - Tactic: SCC program leads and financial staff establish and publish clear Grants and Contracts Procedure Manual and programmatic guidelines for SCC funded programs.

Objective: Majority of CDs continuously improve operations through utilization of CAPP Performance Standards and training opportunities.

- Strategy: CAPP Performance Standards are clear, relevant, and designed to maximize CD success.
✓ Tactic: RM北 review and update CAPP Performance Standards periodically for District use.
✓ Tactic: Provide and implement CAPP.

➢ Strategy: CDs are well-supported, have access to resources, information and assistance to be successful.
✓ Tactic: RM北 publish District Digest on a monthly basis to provide resources, updates and information to conservation districts.
✓ Tactic: SCC staff seek out and provide training and resources to assist conservation districts in all aspects of district operations. Regional Managers support, guide and assist.
✓ Tactic: SCC provides regularly updated CD resource webpages (such as current COVID page, Elections, Supervisor Development)
✓ Tactic: SCC provides marketing and outreach tools and templates for District use.
✓ Tactic: SCC will partner with SAO, Enduris, MRSC, WACD, WADE, NRCS, NCPP, etc... To bring resources and training opportunities for Districts.
✓ Tactic: SCC staff will seek out and participate in training opportunities to build skill sets in our team to assist Districts.

➢ Strategy: Provide timely resources or hands-on assistance, upon CD request, to resolve issues and address emerging operational needs.
✓ Tactic: All RM北 and other SCC staff as needed, receive CRM and facilitation training.
✓ Tactic: SCC will partner with SAO, Enduris and MRSC to disseminate information to CDs on new operational requirements and resources.

⊗ Objective: Majority of CDs see increase in technical capacity by December 31, 2027.

➢ Strategy: Support the Center for Technical Development in their efforts to build District technical capacity.
✓ Tactic: Support establishment of a shared Training Coordinator position with NRCS.
✓ Tactic: Provide funding for Center for Technical Development activities based upon submittal and approval of annual plans of work.

➢ Strategy: Increase recognition of CD technical capacity and expertise.
✓ Tactic: Share information about conservation district technical capacity and expertise with partner agencies and others.
Tactic: Create venues or secure opportunities for CD staff to demonstrate professional and technical capacity and expertise.

V. Goal: Conservation district boards are well-supported to achieve their mission.

Objective: CD boards have access to relevant and credible information.
- Strategy: SCC share resources and information with CDs to help them build and implement long range strategic plans.
- Tactic: Gather and share natural resources data or other relevant local or community data.
- Tactic: Seek out connections with groups and organizations with complimentary missions to SCC and CDs and facilitate connections and formation of partnerships.

Objective: SCC has increased funding support to conservation districts.
- Strategy: SCC continuously seeks funding opportunities for CD work.
- Tactic: SCC participates in WACD’s long term sustainable funding committee.
- Tactic: SCC compiles biennial budget needs of CDs for submittal to OFM/legislature.

Objective: SCC provides support to CDs on district operational matters.
- Strategy: Regional Managers seek training, information, and resources on district operations topics and focus/deliver it to CDs.
- Tactic: RMs participate in training to build RM team knowledge base on topics such as: human resources, risk management, funding and organizational development, finances and accounting etc…
- Strategy: SCC offers facilitation support for CDs to assist with strategic planning, partnership development and/or issues resolution.
- Tactic: SCC staff (Regional managers and others as appropriate) receive professional development training in facilitation and mediation.
- Tactic: RMs provide timely reminders to assist CDs to meet deadlines and due dates.
- Strategy: Regional managers exist at sufficient capacity to provide timely service to conservation districts.
Tactic: Prioritization and evaluation of SCC staff (RMs and VSP) workload is balanced to provide service to CDs and respond to internal agency demands on capacity as well.

Objective: CDs have technical resources such as broadband internet, proper tools and equipment to fulfill their mission.

Priority Area: Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration

I. Earn and maintain the trust of partners and decision-makers

Objective: Key partners express trust in their relationship with the SCC.

- Strategy: Maintain open lines of communication with our partners about the direction of our work.
  - Tactic: Invite partners to provide updates/presentations about their work at Commission meetings.
  - Tactic: Engage with partners as we develop decision package funding requests.
  - Tactic: WSCC Executive Director maintains regular meetings with key state and federal agency leaders, and other key decision makers.
- Serve as a conduit of information between partners and districts.
  - Tactic: Send announcements to CDs via GovDelivery on behalf of partners.
  - Tactic: Send periodic policy newsletter to districts covering SCC policy and program activities.
  - Tactic: Inform CDs of various rulemaking and policy activities at other partner agencies and assist CDs with possible comments.
  - Tactic: Explore use of agency web page and social media to distribute information between partners and districts.

II. Demonstrate leadership in voluntary conservation resulting in innovative natural resource solutions that work

Objective: Decision-makers demonstrate increased support and recognition for our work, such as through funding, legislation, and/or invitations to lead and contribute to key initiatives.
Strategy: Increase awareness of the effectiveness and efficiency of our delivery system

- Tactic: Develop database system used by CDs to report on projects and activities implemented with funding provided by SCC and from other sources.
- Tactic: Develop project portfolios for communicating the effectiveness and efficiency of our delivery system. (*here’s what we did with the resources provided…..*)
- Tactic: Communicate success stories for partners.

Strategy: Communicate activities to key audience(s).

- Tactic: Develop communication tools, such as newsletters and social media, for distribution of information.
- Tactic: Conduct periodic “all district” meetings with CDs to share important information and gather feedback.
- Tactic: Conduct regular meetings with state legislators during session and during interim.
- Tactic: Invite key state, federal, and Tribal leaders and staff to participate in SCC meeting tours.
- Tactic: Targeted messages for Congressional delegation members.

Strategy: Share innovative strategies by conservation districts with our partners

- Tactic: Conduct targeted meetings with key partners to share CD activities.
- Tactic: SCC annual report includes innovative activities by CDs.
- Tactic: Explore other communication tools and social media as a means to get the message out about innovative strategies.

III. Cultivate a broad and inclusive culture of conservation

Objective: By December 2027, our services have successfully engaged new people from a variety of social and economic groups with agriculture and farming.

- Strategy: Coordinate with partners to create opportunities for new and beginning farmers, including from communities that traditionally are underserved.
Tactic: Seek funding for Farmland Protection and Land Acquisition (FPLA) supporting the WA State Housing Finance Commission’s FarmPAI program.

Tactic: Through the state Food Policy Forum, work with Forum members to identify innovative programs to engage new and beginning farmers and traditionally underserved are able to engage in farming.

Tactic: Through engagement with the Pacific Education Institute and CDs Educators Group, develop and implement K-12 programs to engage and interest students in agricultural careers.

Tactic: Engage with partners and CDs to ensure our programs include urban agriculture opportunities.

Objective: By December 2027, our structure, programs, policies, and services have been evaluated and a process is in place for their continual evaluation as part of our due diligence to promote fair and equal access to our services and to ensure all Washingtonians feel encouraged and welcome to participate in our work.

Strategy: Support efforts to explore and identify opportunities within our agency that could help us better reach, serve, and show our respect for all people and communities.

Tactic: Seek funding for an agency equity assessment.

Tactic: Based on results of agency equity assessment, review agency policies to ensure equitable principles are followed.

Tactic: Support ongoing efforts of the agency DEI Working Group

Tactic: Evaluate SCC programs to ensure implementation is incorporating equitable principles, making programs accessible to all including historically underrepresented groups.

Objective: By December 2027, we are reaching, engaging, and serving a wider diversity of communities and people in our state, including multilingual communities, with our work.

Strategy: Broaden understanding of who we serve and who we’re missing.

Tactic: Identify data resources that will help identify historically underrepresented communities and opportunities for engagement.

Tactic: Identify opportunity to engage with CDs and WACD on the demographic data and identify and develop strategies to engage these communities.

Strategy: Strengthen outreach to engage Latino farmers.
✓ Tactic: Conduct meetings with key Latino groups to hear from them how they would like to engage in our programs.
✓ Tactic: Increase translation of program outreach materials to Spanish.
✓ Tactic: Identify training programs for CDs on outreach to Latino farmer communities.
✓ Tactic: Compile information on current ongoing activities at SCC and CDs engaging with Latino farmers.

➢ Strategy: Strengthen outreach and engagement with Tribes.
   ✓ Tactic: Conduct meetings between SCC Executive Director and Commission members and key Tribal leaders.
   ✓ Tactic: SCC staff participate in Tribal outreach trainings.
   ✓ Tactic: Tribal engagement trainings are offered to CDs.

➢ Strategy: Continue implementation of our Accessibility Plan.
   ✓ Tactic: Add alternate text to SCC social media platforms.
   ✓ Tactic: Identify how users are accessing our information and products.

IV. Foster collaborative, holistic, multi-benefit solutions for natural resources and agriculture

➢ Strategy: Continue coordination of Coordinated Resource Management (CRM).
   ✓ Tactic: SCC staff work with CRM partners to complete CRM inventory and assessment of current and inactive CRMs.
   ✓ Tactic: SCC staff work with partners to identify opportunities for CRM establishment and engagement.
   ✓ Tactic: Showcase CRM successes through website and annual Executive tour.
   ✓ Tactic: Secure funding and create part-time CRM coordinator position to support existing and new CRMs.

➢ Strategy: Identify and implement opportunities to facilitate collaborative discussion around key natural resources issues.
   ✓ Tactic: Facilitate discussions on stock water issues.
   ✓ Tactic: Support Local Work Groups.
Meeting Agenda
Thursday, May 19, 2022

Business Meeting

Time
Please note that the times listed below are estimated and may vary. Please visit the SCC website for the most up-to-date meeting information.

Meeting accommodations
Persons with a disability needing an accommodation to participate in SCC public meetings should call Lori Gonzalez at 360-407-7417, or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than Tuesday, May 10, 2022 to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

Meeting Coordinates
To participate online, please register in advance of this meeting via this link. You may use your computer audio, or dial into the meeting using the information provided after logging in. Guests will be muted by the host upon login to allow for full discussion by Commissioners.

Public Comment
Public Comment will be allowed prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

Agenda – Please note: all agenda items needing action will be listed under Tab 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
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<th>ITEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call to order/Welcome/Introductions</td>
<td>Chair Williams</td>
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<td>• Roll Call</td>
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<td>• Pledge of Allegiance</td>
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<td>• Additions/Corrections to agenda items</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Consent Agenda – (Action items)</td>
<td>Chair Williams</td>
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</table>

Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

a. March 17, 2022, Draft Meeting Minutes
b. Executive Director Out of State Travel Approval:
   • **NW Land Camp** - Linfield University, McMinnville, OR June 28-29, 2022
   • NASCA Board Meeting- York Beach, ME May 23-26, 2022
8:55 a.m. 1. District Operations – (Action items)

Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

c. Grant County Conservation District Petition for Name Change
   Lead: Mike Baden

d. Conservation District Supervisor Appointments for the West Region
   Lead: Comm. Longrie

e. Conservation District Supervisor Appointments for the Central Region
   Lead: Comm. Crose

f. Conservation District Supervisor Appointments for the East Region
   Lead: Comm. Cochran

g. Conservation District Election Certifications
   Lead: Bill Eller

9:35 a.m. 2. Commission Operations (Information only)

a. Conservation Month and Elections Communications
   Lead: Paige DeChambeau

9:50 a.m. 1. Budget and Finance - (Action items)

Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

h. Funding Allocation and Approval for Fiscal Year 2023
   Lead: Sarah Groth

i. Review of WACD and WSCC’s Agreement
   Lead: Sarah Groth

j. Update on FY 23-25 Budget Build
   Lead: Packet item only

10:15 a.m. – 15 MINUTE BREAK

10:30 a.m. 1. Policy & Programs – call for public comment (Action items)

Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

k. Farmland Protection and Land Access Program Guidelines
   Lead: Kate Delavan

l. Draft Sustainable Farms and Field Guidelines
   Lead: Alison Halpern

m. Conservation Disaster Assistance Program Funding Guidelines
   Lead: Bill Eller

12:00 p.m. – LUNCH
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<th>TIME</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Commission Operations <em>(Information only)</em></td>
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<td>b. Communications Updates</td>
<td>Laura Meyer</td>
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<td>1:15 p.m.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Policy &amp; Programs <em>(Information only)</em></td>
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<td>c. Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) Update</td>
<td>Alison Halpern /Mike Kuttel Jr.</td>
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<td>d. Voluntary Stewardship Program Update</td>
<td>Packet Item Only</td>
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<td>e. Drought Update</td>
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<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>District Operations <em>(Information only)</em></td>
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<td>g. District Operations Regional Manager Report</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
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<td>h. Center for Technical Development Update</td>
<td>Packet Item Only</td>
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<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Partner Updates <em>(Information only)</em></td>
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<td>i. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 Update</td>
<td>Nick Peak</td>
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<td>j. Department of Fish and Wildlife</td>
<td>Mike Kuttel, Jr.</td>
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<td>k. Natural Resources and Conservation Service Update</td>
<td>Roylene Comes at Night</td>
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<td>l. National Association of Conservation Districts Update</td>
<td>Packet Item Only</td>
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<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Commission Operations <em>(Information only)</em></td>
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<td>m. SCC General Update</td>
<td>Director Pettit</td>
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<td>n. Correspondence Received- Central Klickitat CD</td>
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<td>2:45 p.m.</td>
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<td>Closing remarks- Adjourn</td>
<td>Chairman Williams</td>
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Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually on March 17, 2022. Chairman Daryl Williams called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

**Note:** All meeting materials can be found on our [meetings webpage](#). You will find the meeting packet with background information, presentations and past meeting information.

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

- **Daryl Williams,** Chairman, Governor Appointee
- **Larry Cochran,** Vice-Chairman, elected eastern region rep.
- **David Giglio,** Department of Ecology
- **Dean Longrie,** elected west region rep
- **Harold Crose,** elected central region rep.
- **Jim Kropf,** Washington State University
- **Mike Mumford,** Washington Association of Conservation Districts
- **Perry Beale,** Department of Agriculture
- **Sarah Spaeth,** Governor Appointee
- **Terra Rentz,** Department of Natural Resources

### COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

- **Christopher Pettit,** Executive Director
- **Lori Gonzalez,** Executive Assistant
- **Ron Shultz,** Policy Director
- **Laura Meyer,** Communications Director
- **Allisa Carlson,** Southcentral Regional Manager
- **Brian Cochrane,** Habitat & Monitoring Coordinator
- **Jean Fike,** Northwest Regional Manager
- **Alicia McClendon,** Administrative Assistant
- **Josh Giuntoli,** Southwest Regional Manager
- **Alison Halpern,** Scientific Policy Advisor
- **Shana Joy,** District Operations Manager
- **Bill Eller,** Voluntary Stewardship Coordinator
- **Paige DeChambeau,** Communications & Outreach Manager

### PARTNERS REPRESENTED

- **Nicholas Peak,** US Environmental Protection Agency Region 10
- **Tom Salzer,** WA Association of Conservation Districts
- **Ryan Baye,** WA Association of Conservation Districts
- **Roylene Comes At Night,** USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **Nick Vira,** NRCS Partnership Liaison
- **Michael Kuttel, Jr.,** WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- **Doug Rushton,** National Association of Conservation Districts

### GUESTS ATTENDED

Please see “Attachment A” for full list of attendees.

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**Consent Agenda (Action)**

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the Consent Agenda (Draft March 17, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes). Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.
District Operations

Rock Lake Conservation District Mid-term Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to appoint Erik Logen to the Rock Lake Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion passed.

Pierce Conservation District Election

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to not certify and announce the official winner of the Pierce Conservation District election as the issue presented did establish a finding of significant noncompliance with WAC Chapter 135-110 and the election procedures published for this election cycle. Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion passed.

Policy & Programs

Agricultural Conservation Easement Sponsorship

Motion by Commissioner Beale that the Commission has determined acquisition of agricultural conservation easements on the three properties is consistent with the mission, duties, and purposes of the SCC.

The Commission hereby authorizes the State Conservation Commission Executive Director to sign required documents to submit grants for agricultural conservation easements on three properties: CKCD Davenport, KCCD Swauk Prairie, and NYCD Emerick. Seconded by Commissioner Giglio. Motion passed.

Draft Sustainable Farms and Fields Draft Programmatic Guidelines

Motion by Commissioner Crose to authorize Director Pettit to approve the dissemination of the first draft of the Sustainable Farms and Fields guidelines to districts and stakeholders for a 45-day review process. Feedback will be gathered and considered by SCC, WSDA, WSU, and NRCS staff during the development of next draft of the guidelines. Final draft will be presented at the May 19 SCC meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Budget and Finance

State Conservation Commission Executive Director Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Rentz to approve the proposed 2023-25 state budget development process and timeline for the SCC and conservation districts (outlined below). Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion passed.

General Process and Timeline

Post-SCC March Meeting:

- Save-the-Date sent to CDs for webinars to help develop budget ideas and funding recommendations. SCC work on session design.
- Message to all conservation districts, WACD and SCC staff regarding the budget development process and ensuring proposed packages have a strong tie to our newly adopted strategic plan.

- **March – April 2022**: SCC develops materials for the all-district meeting.
- **April 2022**: SCC/CD meeting to begin budget development strategy. Identify budget proposal topics. Identify work groups to continue development of decision packages.
- **April-June 2022**: Outreach to other agencies and stakeholders.
- **May 19, 2022**: Commission to discuss proposed decision packages.

Approve:
1) the budget package topics and
2) to continue development of decision packages for these topics. (Any late-developing topics will be presented to the Commission at the July meeting.) Approval of topics at this meeting ensures that districts can design more effective tours in the summer months.

- **May – July 2022**: Continued work by SCC, and CDs on refining decision packages. Continued outreach to stakeholders and agencies.
- **July 21, 2022**: At the SCC regular meeting, refined information, including funding levels, is presented for each budget topic. Commissioners approve submittal of the budget and prioritize decision packages.
- **September 1, 2022**: Operating and Capital budget proposals submitted to OFM.
- **September 15, 2022**: Commission approves messaging around budget proposals.
- **December 2022**: Governor releases proposed Biennium 2023-25 operating and capital budgets.

Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 2:51 p.m.
Meeting Attendees

March 17, 2022

Attendees

Alan Chapman
Bill Blake
Cody Makiva
Dana Coggon
Jeanette Dorner
Karla Heinitz
Mike Tobin
Ryan Williams

Attachment A
TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: Christopher Pettit
SCC Executive Director

SUBJECT: Out of State Approval for Executive Director

Summary:
The Executive Director of the State Conservation Commission must seek approval by the Commission to attend out-of-state meetings and conferences. To ensure registrations and logistics are coordinated in a timely manner, the director requests to attend the following:

**May 23-26, 2022:** National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) Board Meeting
York Beach, Maine

**June 28-29, 2022:** Northwest Land Camp
McMinnville, Oregon

Requested Action:
Approval for the Executive Director to attend the NASCA Board Meeting in York Beach, ME, May 23-26, 2022, and approval for Executive Director to attend the NW Land Camp in McMinnville, OR, June 28 & 29, 2022.

Staff Contact:
Christopher Pettit, cpettit@scc.wa.gov
Lori Gonzalez, lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov
Summary:
The Grant County Conservation District has provided to the Conservation Commission, for consideration of approval, the pertinent paperwork and petition to change their name to the “Columbia Basin Conservation District”

Requested Action:
Consider, for potential action, the Grant County Conservation District name change.

Staff Contact:
Mike Baden, mbaden@scc.wa.gov, 509.385.7510

Background and Discussion:
Upon consolidation of the Grant, Moses Lake, and Warden Conservation Districts in 2012, the Grant County Conservation District was chosen as the name of the newly consolidated district. The District has been considering a name change to better reflect the area that they serve – Grant County and the Panhandle of Adams County. To that end the District has chosen “Columbia Basin Conservation District” as the name they would like to put forward for consideration by the Conservation Commission. The District believes the timing as good to reflect the new branding as they look to move into their new building this summer and they will be updating their signage, letterhead, etc…to reflect their new location. The District has conducted outreach activities to neighboring districts regarding the proposed name change and has considered feedback in their decision.

Recommended Action and Options:
Consider, for potential action, the Grant County Conservation District name change.
PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE OF THE
GRANT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
TO BE KNOWN AS THE
COLUMBIA BASIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TO: The Washington State Conservation Commission

Pursuant to the Conservation Districts Law (Chapter 89.08 RCW) the undersigned supervisors of the Grant County Conservation District, respectfully represent:

First: That heretofore, the Grant County Conservation District was duly organized as a governmental subdivision of this state and a public body corporate and politic.

Second: That there is need, in the interest of the public health, safety, welfare, and operating efficiency, for the Grant County Conservation District to change its name to be known as the Columbia Basin Conservation District.

Third: That this petition is signed by the Grant County Conservation District Board.

WHEREFORE, the undersigned supervisors of the Grant County Conservation District respectfully request that the Washington State Conservation Commission duly determine that changing the name of the Grant County Conservation District to be known as the Columbia Basin Conservation District is in the interest of public health, safety, welfare, and more efficient operations.

Dave Stahlman
Chairman

Richard Suits
Vice Chairman

Secretary-Treasurer

John Preston
Member

Member

The signing of this Petition was authorized by a resolution of the Grant County Conservation District Board of Supervisors adopted on April 12, 2022.

Date

Secretary
WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of the Grant County Conservation District ("District") operates under the laws of the State of Washington applicable to conservation districts.

WHEREAS the District is governed by a five-member board, as set out in RCW Chapter 89.08 and WAC Section 135-110.

WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors recognize the District’s name, Grant County Conservation District, does not fully encompass the District’s service area, including all of Grant County and portions of Adams County;

WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors recognize a new name, such as Columbia Basin Conservation District, would reduce confusion and help the District better represent and serve the District’s full service area;

WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors recognize now is the best time to change the District’s name given the updates that will need to be made (i.e. District stationary, contact information, etc.) in conjunction with the District’s move to its new building in June 2022; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the District Board of Supervisors approve the name change of the District from Grant County Conservation District to the Columbia Basin Conservation District; and

RESOLVED that the District Board of Supervisors will sign and submit the "Petition for Name Change of the Grant County Conservation District to be known as the Columbia Basin Conservation District" to the Washington State Conservation Commission for consideration.

Adopted at a regular board meeting of the District Board of Supervisors on April 12, 2022.

Dave Stadelman – Chairman
Glenn Burkholder – Member

Richard Leitz – Vice Chair
John Preston – Member

Dan Roseburg – Auditor
Background and Summary:
During the current appointment cycle, the State Conservation Commission (SCC) received a total of 32 appointed conservation district supervisor applications to fill full-term and mid-term positions across the state. All applications for the full-term appointments were due into the Commission by March 31, 2021 and applications for mid-term appointments were due no later than April 20, 2022.

Of the 32 applications that were received, staff identified 10 applications from four conservation districts needing a more comprehensive review. The review consists of interviewing individual candidates for situations where there is a competition for an appointed position as well as when there is one candidate that is new to serving as a supervisor. For situations where there is only the incumbent applying for re-appointment, the incumbent will remain in their position.

This year, 10 individual interviews were conducted with the area commission member, another available commission member, and one regional manager.

Requested Action:
The elected area commission members representing the west, central and east regions will make their recommendations to appoint individuals to the conservation district board of supervisors for SCC approval at the May 19, 2022 meeting.

Note: To protect the personal information on the applications received, applications are not included in the public meeting packet; only the names of the applicants are provided in the listings below. All members were sent full applications for review ahead of time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation District</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Name of Applicant(s)</th>
<th>Regional Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clallam</td>
<td>Matthew Heins</td>
<td>1. Nicole Rasmussen; 2. Julie Knobel; 3. Kathrine (Katja) Bridwell</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1. Elijah Christian</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mid-term)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitsap</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1. David Vliet</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mid-term)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>Jason Ragan</td>
<td>1. Jason Ragan</td>
<td>Josh Giuntoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palouse</td>
<td>Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison</td>
<td>1. Sheryl Hagen Zakarison</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palouse</td>
<td>Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison</td>
<td>1. Sheryl Hagen Zakarison</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagit</td>
<td>Dean Wesen</td>
<td>1. Dean Wesen</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>Mark Craven</td>
<td>1. Mark Craven</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurston</td>
<td>Betsie DeWreede</td>
<td>1. Betsie DeWreede</td>
<td>Jean Fike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commissioner Longrie has vetted the Palouse Conservation District re-appointment application for Commissioner Cochran and will provide a recommendation to board members for their consideration at the May meeting.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation District</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Name of Applicant(s)</th>
<th>Regional Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cascadia</td>
<td>Kurt Hosman</td>
<td>1. Kurt Hosman</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Creek</td>
<td>Kelsey Tanneberg</td>
<td>1. Kelsey Tanneberg</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Richard (Scott) Moore</td>
<td>1. Richard (Scott) Moore</td>
<td>Allisa Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittitas County</td>
<td>William Boyum</td>
<td>1. William Boyum</td>
<td>Allisa Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanogan</td>
<td>Lorah Super</td>
<td>1. Lorah Super</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Douglas</td>
<td>Eileen Bone</td>
<td>1. Justin Grillo</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### May 2022 Appointment Applications – Eastern Region

**Commissioner Cochran**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation District</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Name of Applicant(s)</th>
<th>Regional Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1. Debra Nordheim</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferry (mid-term)</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1. Joann Marshall; 2. Loni Simone</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Grant County</em></td>
<td>Richard Leitz</td>
<td>1. Richard Leitz</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln County</td>
<td>Chris Laney</td>
<td>1. Chris Laney</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>Jeffrey Pittman</td>
<td>1. Jeffrey Pittman</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomeroy</td>
<td>Beau Blachly</td>
<td>1. Beau Blachly</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane</td>
<td>Gerald Scheele</td>
<td>1. Gerald Scheele</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens County</td>
<td>Connie Bergstrom</td>
<td>1. Connie Bergstrom</td>
<td>Mike Baden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla County</td>
<td>Jeffrey Schulke</td>
<td>1. Jeffrey Schulke</td>
<td>Allisa Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman</td>
<td>David Lange</td>
<td>1. David Lange</td>
<td>Shana Joy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commissioner Cochran has vetted the Grant County Conservation District re-appointment application for Commissioner Crose and will provide recommendation to board members for their consideration at the May meeting.*
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, WSCC Elections Officer

SUBJECT: 2022 Conservation District Elections

Action Item X

Informational Item

Summary:
Staff recommends the Commission certify and announce the official winners of 44 of the 45 conservation district elections. None of these districts had any issues of significant noncompliance with WAC Title 135-110 and the election procedures published for this cycle. The Commission declined to certify the Pierce Conservation District (PCD) election at the March 17, 2022 meeting, and PCD is pursuing a new election this summer.

Requested Action:
That the Commission certifies and announces the official winners of 44 of 45 conservation district elections, as listed in the table below entitled: Conservation District Election Results.

Staff Contact:
Bill Eller, WSCC Elections Officer        beller@scc.wa.gov        (509) 385-7512

Background, Discussion, and Election Compliance:
None of the 44 districts had any issues of significant noncompliance with WAC Title 135-110 and the election procedures published for this cycle that rose to the level warranting non-certification of the election.

District staff responsible for elections did a great job in solving most issues related to election rules and policy compliance and adjusting to the changes to the election WAC that the Commission made in September 2020. Virtually all the issues that did arise were resolved before they became irreversible or otherwise affected the election process.
Compliance with election rules and policies seems to have held steady this year, but the increasing politicization of the conservation district election process, use of technology (internet ballot requests) and lingering issues related to COVID-19 continue to put pressure on our election system. While providing election forms and most other materials electronically has created some efficiencies, processing and interpreting the election data and conducting election investigations continues to take substantial Commission staff time and resources.

In general, issues encountered by conservation district staff and Commission staff in the holding, processing, and administration of elections generally fell into these categories:

- **Pre-election activities**
  - Notice of election
  - Election location
  - Election type
  - Candidate filing
  - Requesting ballots
  - Candidate statements
  - Emergencies and how to handle them

- **During the election and Election Day**
  - Campaigning
  - Candidate optional information (biography and statement)
  - Requesting ballots
  - Poll-sites during a pandemic

- **The election process**
  - Candidate eligibility
  - Voter eligibility

- **Voting and ballots**
  - Ballots generally
  - Ballot handling
  - Fulfilling ballot requests
  - Mail-in elections

CDs continue to adjust to the WAC changes adopted at the September 2020 Commission meeting. There were many substantive and procedural changes the Commission made to election processes and procedures in the changes that were made in September 2020, for the first time since the WAC was adopted in 2010. Conservation district staff are still adjusting to those changes.
Preparation for the 2021-2022 election cycle included:

- **September 23, 2021 Elections Training Webinar.** Commission staff presented an election webinar to districts highlighting areas for improvement based on last years’ election cycle, outlining election forms and manual changes, and reminding districts of important timelines and election procedures.

- **Outreach during the Election Cycle.** Commission staff made a concerted effort during the election cycle (September 2021 - March 2022) to communicate with districts the intricacies of the election cycle, timelines, deadlines, and procedures.

- **Monthly Election Information.** Commission staff created reminders and informational statements that were provided each month from September through April to anyone subscribing to the Commission’s Elections and Appointments listserv through the Commission’s GovDelivery system.

- **Election Boot-Camp.** The Commission election officer offered election “boot-camps” were held to introduce new district and Commission staff to the election and appointment procedures. No CD personnel took advantage of a boot-camp.

**District Election Summary:**

All conservation districts held elections this year. As a result, 44 elections were held without any errors that would cause the non-certification of their election.

**Recommended Action and Options:**

That the Commission certifies and announces the official winners of 44 conservation district elections, as listed in the table below entitled: **Conservation District Election Results.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD</th>
<th>ELECTION TYPE*</th>
<th># OF CANDIDATES</th>
<th>ELECTION WINNER</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Middle Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Hennings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asotin County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Levi</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Luhn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Crowder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cascadia</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M. (Mons)</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Teigen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Klickitat</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>Schuster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clallam</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Christy</td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Cox</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Susan (Sue)</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowritz</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Keatley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Klickitat</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ronald</td>
<td>Junis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferry</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Konz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Creek</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Troutman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Wieseler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Glenn</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Burkholder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grays Harbor</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Doelman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Hannan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kirstin</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Haugen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitsap</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Robert &quot;Bob&quot;</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Gilby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittitas County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Moore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Moir</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Braidy</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Haden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Echeverria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yakima</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanogan</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Colvin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Metzger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palouse</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Collins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palouse Rock Lake</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Kucklick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pend Oreille</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Driver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Pomeroy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Claassen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan Islands</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagit</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Rejm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>VanValkenburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Douglas</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Morrison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yakima</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>Lopez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jaki</td>
<td>Shrauger</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurston</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TJ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Johnson</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwood</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kristina</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Perez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahkiakum</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Florek Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Kent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatcom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Valeri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whidbey Island</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Awa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Startin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"W" = Write-in only; "C" = One candidate's name pre-printed on the ballot; "M" = multiple candidates; **Pierce CD is re-doing their election**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>Total # ballots cast</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Total # ballots cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td></td>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Asotin County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cascadia</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9 0* 0* 6W 2W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Klickitat</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Clallam</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>415 451 70C 14C 7W</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 8 44 21C 13C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15 29C 18C 22C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowitz</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Klickitat</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4 9W 10W 11W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferry</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Creek</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 4W 7W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 1 0* 0* 0* 0* 1C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grays Harbor</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1W 5 3W 6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10,032</td>
<td>9 9,546 6194 3535 12W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittitas County</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>1 47</td>
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<td>Lewis County</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>1 7</td>
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<td>Lincoln County</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>C</td>
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May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 23 Allocations

Background Summary:
SCC staff seek approval to allocate funds to districts for Fiscal Year 23.

Requested Action:
Approve the funding proposal proposed below with specific award amounts for the following grant programs in the attached table.

Staff Contact:
Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget, sgroth@scc.wa.gov.

Background and Discussion:

1. SCC Administration: The operating budget passed by the legislature allows for administration funding to continue at the same levels as fiscal year 22 biennium. As SCC staff determine best course(s) of action, SCC staff recommends continuing administration activities at the fiscal year 22, level with a few small adjustments to increase staff capacity in areas the Executive Director and commission staff have identified.

2. Implementation Allocation (Exhibit 1): SCC recommends funding for Implementation in accordance with the Updated Implementation Grant Allocation (approved at March 21, 2019 SCC regular business meeting) at $5,302,000 per fiscal year, an increase of approximately $1,000,000 per fiscal year due to increased CTA funding received in the 2021-2023 operating budget. This award includes the new CTA funding of $2,000,000/biennium plus the previously-named orca/salmon CTA at $1,000,000 biennium that was received in the 2019-2021 biennium.

3. Irrigation Efficiencies (Exhibit 1): Irrigation Efficiencies - Appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance and grants to conservation districts for the purpose of implementing
water conservation measures and irrigation efficiencies. SCC shall give preference in order of priority to projects located in the 16 fish critical basins, other water short basins, and basins with significant water resource and instream flow problems. Projects that are not within basins as described in this subsection are also eligible to receive funding. Conservation districts statewide are eligible for grants listed in subsection (1) of this section. A conservation district receiving funds shall manage each grant to ensure that a portion of the water saved by the water conservation measure or irrigation efficiency will be placed as a purchase or a lease in the trust water rights program to enhance instream flows. The proportion of saved water placed in the trust water rights program must be equal to the percentage of the public investment in the conservation measure or irrigation efficiency. The percentage of the public investment may not exceed eighty-five percent of the total cost of the conservation measure or irrigation efficiency. Up to $300,000 of the appropriation in this section may be allocated for the purchase and installation of flow meters that are implemented in cooperation with the WDFW fish screening program authorized under RCW 77.57.070.

4. CREP project development and project management/TA (Exhibit 1): The capital budget passed by the legislature included $4,000,000 for CREP. This included proviso language for $2,000,000 for project development and project management /TA, $250,000 for targeted riparian buffer incentive project (Mount Vernon) as well as reappropriation for unspent 2019-2021 Cost Share and TA funds. SCC staff is requesting approval of the attached table, exhibit, to provide TA funding for fiscal year 2022, Cost Share Allocations will be funded as the project requests come in.

5. Task Orders: The operating budget allows SCC to continue funding NRCS task orders at a level slightly higher to fiscal year 2021 funding not to exceed $225,000 per fiscal year. SCC staff are working with districts and NRCS to prepare task orders to allow districts to begin work July 1, 2022. SCC staff recommend, as was the case in fiscal year 2022, SCC staff in consultation with NRCS would be authorized to approve and execute new task orders.

6. Wildfire Recovery Funding “One-time funding is provided for conservation district technical assistance, project cultural resources review, engineering, and cost-share grants to landowners for recovery from wildfire damage.”
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May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 23 Supplemental Allocations

Action Item X
Informational Item

Background Summary:
SCC staff seek approval to allocate supplemental funds to districts for Fiscal Year 23.

Requested Action:
Approve the funding proposals as described below.

Staff Contact:
Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget, sgroth@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:
Salmon Recovery Account

1. CREP $5,000,000
   The Commission received funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding operating account and general operating to supplement CREP. Commission staff are currently developing guidelines for use of the funding. The general approach under consideration is to target immediate, near-term funding to salmon critical basins to achieve riparian habitat benefits. Strategies and approaches under consideration include:
   • Focusing on critical fish basins to improve habitat conditions where salmon species are in critical condition and allowing FSA staff to efficiently focus on CREP;
   • Building on the Skagit proviso in current funding, conducting economic and feasibility analyses for additional incentives such as:
     o Parity with commodity prices,
     o Grouped projects within a sub-basin to achieve linear riparian habitat improvements over multiple parcels;
     o Targeted incentives for reaches with greater resource concerns (e.g. temperature),
   • Leveraging CREP with the other Salmon Recovery Funding the commission received;
• Investigating and incorporating riparian practices that result in better outcomes vs those currently approved for program use;
• Connect district proposed projects with restoration priorities for local salmon recovery organizations and leveraging instream work with CREP riparian efforts;
• Providing resources for conservation district staff capacity and training to provide landowner technical assistance and manage project implementation;
• Developing scientific and technical capacity at the Commission to support data collection, science support for identification of key salmon recovery locations, and coordination and collaboration with other state, federal, local and tribal salmon recovery entities;
• Developing capacity at the Commission and conservation districts to monitor results of project implementation and resource impact.

2. Riparian Restoration Projects $10,000,000 -
The Commission received funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding operating account for the purposes of addressing salmon riparian habitat needs. Commission staff are currently developing guidelines for use of the funding. The general approach under consideration is to target immediate, near-term funding to salmon critical basins to achieve riparian habitat benefits. Strategies and approaches under consideration include:
• Grouping projects within a sub-basin to achieve linear riparian habitat improvements over multiple parcels;
• Focusing on temperature impaired stream segments;
• Focusing on critical fish basins to improve habitat conditions where salmon species are in critical condition;
• Connect district proposed projects with restoration priorities for local salmon recovery organizations;
• Providing resources for conservation district staff capacity to provide landowner technical assistance and manage project implementation;
• Develop scientific and technical capacity at the Commission to support data collection, science support for identification of key salmon recovery locations, and coordination and collaboration with other state, federal, local and tribal salmon recovery entities;
• Develop capacity at the Commission and conservation districts to monitor results of project implementation and resource impact.

Operating

1. CREP $2,000,000 - The Commission received funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding operating account and general operating to supplement CREP. Commission staff are currently developing guidelines for use of the funding. The general approach under consideration is to target immediate, near-term funding to salmon critical basins to achieve riparian habitat benefits. Strategies and approaches under consideration include:
• Focusing on critical fish basins to improve habitat conditions where salmon species are in critical condition and allowing FSA staff to efficiently focus on CREP;
• Building on the Skagit proviso in current funding, conducting economic and feasibility analyses for additional incentives such as:
  o Parity with commodity prices,
  o Grouped projects within a sub-basin to achieve linear riparian habitat improvements over multiple parcels;
• Targeted incentives for reaches with greater resource concerns (e.g. temperature),
• Leveraging CREP with the other Salmon Recovery Funding the commission received;
• Investigating and incorporating riparian practices that result in better outcomes vs those currently approved for program use;
• Connect district proposed projects with restoration priorities for local salmon recovery organizations and leveraging instream work with CREP riparian efforts;
• Providing resources for conservation district staff capacity and training to provide landowner technical assistance and manage project implementation;
• Developing scientific and technical capacity at the Commission to support data collection, science support for identification of key salmon recovery locations, and coordination and collaboration with other state, federal, local and tribal salmon recovery entities;
• Developing capacity at the Commission and conservation districts to monitor results of project implementation and resource impact.

2. Sustainable Fields & Farms $2,000,000 - The SCC’s $2M supplemental budget request for the new Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) grant program was included in the FY23 budget. This will be the first time since the SFF bill passed during the 2020 legislative session that funding has been appropriated for this program. The SFF program was created to increase climate-smart practices – i.e., those that sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions – on farmland, rangeland, and aquaculture tidelands. It is open to conservation districts and other public entities who can apply for funding to provide technical and financial assistance to producers. The draft SFF programmatic guidelines are out for review and adoption of the final version is anticipated at the May SCC meeting so the program can be rolled out in July.

3. Riparian Plant Nurseries $1,300,000 - The Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP) is a new program at the SCC. The purpose of the program is to increase propagation of native trees and shrubs for use in riparian restoration projects and was created amid concerns that there is an insufficient inventory of plants to meet the needs of riparian habitat. The program will focus on two approaches: one is to work with wholesale nurseries and DNR to find ways to ramp up production; the other is to work with interested districts to increase propagation and cultivation of trees and shrubs at the community level. For example, a district might have the capacity/facilities to germinate seeds or vegetatively propagate cuttings and then partner with tribes, farmers, schools, senior centers, or interested citizens to grow out the trees/shrubs until they are ready for planting. The Legislature appropriated $1.3M for FY23, and this funding is ongoing.

4. Professional Engineering $2,700,000 - Currently there are nine (9) cooperative engineering areas of conservation districts in the state. One “host” conservation district receives a grant from the SCC that is administered in a given engineering area through an Inter-local Agreement between the cooperating districts. Current SCC general operating
funding utilized for engineering grants this FY22 is $675,000. New supplemental budget appropriation increases the amount available for engineering to $2.7M per fiscal year beginning in FY23. SCC staff recommend the following:

- Utilize existing structure of area engineering grants to groups of cooperating CDs (engineering areas) and increase the amount to each host district for FY23 to $200,000 per fiscal year.
- For FY23 only, establish a short application form for additional engineering funds to be applied for if needed above the $200,000/FY for equipment or additional staff or contractor(s) as needed to provide engineering services for larger projects. This opportunity to be open to all CDs.
- Hold back up to $200,000 for FY23 for statewide needs including: Updating of CPDS with practice engineering information, training/mentoring to navigate new FEMA-required No Net Rise Permit, and capacity for coordination on engineering related topics and needs between the area host conservation districts and engineering staff as needed. This is an estimate only and the full amount may or may not be needed.
- SCC staff will form a committee of CD representatives to craft area engineering grant programmatic guidelines and present them to Commissioners for potential action prior to the start of FY24. These programmatic guidelines will include consideration of and a method for conservation districts to re-organize the existing engineering areas if needed.

5. **Ag Disaster $300,000** - The Washington State Legislature appropriated $600,000 ($300,000 FY22 & $300,000 in FY23) funds for the Commission to create a disaster assistance program specially to respond to the Whatcom County disaster in November-December 2021, and to begin the process to provide disaster assistance statewide for the FY 22-23 biennium. SCC has never had a disaster relief program before, and due to the timing of the legislation and funding, SCC staff created the programmatic DAP guidelines as soon as possible. The guidelines set out the procedures for farmer and ranchers to apply for disaster assistance, including cost-share, for reimbursable expenses incurred on account of disaster. The guidelines utilize existing SCC grant procedures as much as possible, and incorporate legislative directives on eligible expenses and applicants. The first iteration of the DAP is focused on the Whatcom County disaster from November-December 2021. An advisory committee of comprised of SCC staff, Whatcom CD staff, WSDA staff, and an Agricultural section representative will review each application and make recommendations to the SCC Executive Director, who will have the final decision on grant funding. The second iteration of the DAP will involve rule-making to address ongoing disaster assistance to farmer and ranchers. It is anticipated that rulemaking will incorporate all existing SCC grant procedures, including CPDS, in the final rule. Complete details are available in the guidelines.

6. **Artificial Lighting $125,000** - The Legislature appropriated $125,000 in FY 2023 pass-through funding (Operating - General Fund State) for King CD. This is a pilot project to reduce the impacts of artificial lighting on or near the water on the behavior of salmon and other aquatic life in Lake Sammamish. The funding may to be used for:
• Supporting local efforts to develop a model ordinance to reduce on-water lighting impacts on salmon for new and existing construction;
• Education and outreach on the impacts of on-water lighting;
• Development of methods to reduce the impacts of on-water lighting;
• A contract with the USGS to conduct a baseline survey of artificial light levels, including light location and intensity along the Lake Sammamish nearshore, artificial light hotspots, and a survey report.

Original funding sought was $250,000, and the partners (KCD, WRIA 8, Municipalities and the USGS) are working to finalize an amended scope. Once the scope is finalized, grant deliverables and reporting requirements can be set. The WSCC is to report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2023 on the use of the funding and the resulting reductions in on-water lighting.

6. Community Wildfire $60,000 - SCC is developing a contract with the Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council to complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Yakima County. $60,000 is the total budget and is one-time pass through funding. Components of the plan will include the prioritization of areas for fuel reduction treatment, protection actions for communities and infrastructure, and recommended measures of protection. This is a multi-partner effort that will include partner and public review periods. The completion of this plan will ensure the county is eligible for federal funding that can be used on non-federal lands.

7. SCC Conservation Equity Work $25,000 - The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) received $50,000 in supplemental funding (regular appropriation) to: “conduct an assessment of its programs and services to identify assets and challenges related to equity and inclusion. The assessment will include recommendations for inclusion in a conservation equity and engagement plan and the agency’s long-range strategic plan.”

The agency DEI Working Group proposes issuing an RFP in the amount of $50K to secure a DEI consultant to complete this internal equity assessment. We aim to launch the contract no later than early September 2022 and close out by June 15, 2023. A key deliverable will be a final report that identifies:

a. Current baseline of agency equity assets and challenges.
b. Suggested schedule of actions to prioritize as the SCC develops a Conservation Equity and Engagement Plan.
c. Recommendations for integrating equity into the implementation and reporting of our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.
d. Recommendations to foster and maintain a strong working relationship with the Office of Equity.
e. Recommendations for future staff trainings.
The vendor will present a draft report to staff, Commissioners, and CDs for feedback before its final.

The assessment and report will contribute to multiple pieces of our long-range strategic plan, particularly our goal to “Cultivate a broad and inclusive culture of conservation” (Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration: Goal 3). Ultimately, the desired outcome is the Conservation Commission will be better positioned to fulfill its statutory duty to ensure the benefits of work carried out by the agency and conservation districts are available in all areas of the state.

**Capital**

1. **Farmland Protection and Land Access $2,000,000** - The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) received $2,000,000 in supplemental funding to: “implement and administer the farmland protection and land access program. In administering this program, the state conservation commission shall support opportunities for all producers but shall prioritize: (a) Conservation of high priority agricultural land at imminent risk of development; and (b) grants for the purchase of agricultural easements to historically underserved producers, as defined in 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022), including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans.”

   Staff identified the following process in order to launch the program in summer 2022:
   - Develop draft guidelines
     - Seek public comment on draft guidelines
     - Incorporate feedback and update guidelines
   - Develop communication plan, including application process
   - Present guidelines at July 21 Business Meeting for Commissioner consideration
   - Launch program in August 2022 or soon thereafter
   - Implement program through June 2023 or until funds runs out

   FPLA aligns most closely with the Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food Systems Support priority area of the Strategic Plan. Specific draft objectives, goals, and tactics supported by or related to FPLA include:
   - Objective: SCC assists in the completion of agricultural and forestland conservation easements.
     - Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) will pursue funding for the SCC’s farmland preservation account.
   - Tactic: SCC will explore development of a decision package to fund the SCC’s farmland preservation account and increase OFP staff capacity to implement the new program.
   - Tactic: SCC will engage with stakeholders for stakeholder interest in seeking funding for the account.
Objective: OFP advances innovative tools for farmland protection and land access.
  o Strategy: SCC supports development of new land access tools/programs such as low-interest loans for conservation entities to facilitate Buy-Protect-Sale transactions.
  o Tactic: OFP acts as a program adviser to the newly created FarmPAI program at the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.
  o Tactic: OFP explores other potential mechanisms for resources to facilitate land access.

2. Voluntary Stewardship Program Projects $3,000,000 - The Washington State Legislature appropriated $3,000,000 in supplemental capital funds for the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) for the FY 22-23 biennium. SCC has not received supplemental funding for VSP in the past, nor has SCC had enough VSP funding for on-the-ground projects. Because of this new funding, SCC staff created the VSP supplemental funding guidelines. The guidelines purpose is to set out the procedures for counties and Conservation Districts for cost-share to eligible landowners for VSP on-the-ground projects. The guidelines utilize existing SCC grant procedures (including CPDS) and includes VSP-specific criteria. SCC staff will review each application, monitor the effect of the criteria on the number of projects seeking funding, and propose modifications to these guidelines if sufficient funding is available to expand the program’s scope. Complete details are available in the guidelines.
TO: Conservation Commission Members
   Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

SUBJECT: Review of WACD & SCC Agreement

Summary:
Each year the SCC requests approval to enter into a contract with WACD for contract work on tasks identified by SCC Executive Director and SCC leadership.

Requested Action:
Approve the request for SCC Executive Director Chris Pettit to work with WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer to develop and enter into a contract up to $100,000 for fiscal year 23. The tasks would include support for the annual meeting in December, preparation for fly-in meeting in concert with NACD and supervisor development and other smaller tasks as identified.

Staff Contact:
Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget, sgroth@scc.wa.gov

Recommended Action and Options (if action item):
Approve the request for SCC Executive Director Chris Pettit to work with WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer to develop and enter into a contract up to $100,000 per fiscal year.
TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

SUBJECT: 2023-2025 Proposed Budget Packages

Background Summary:
The list of proposed decision packages for the 2023-25 biennium has been developed. A survey has gone out to districts and we will have the results of that survey at the July commission meeting.

Staff Contact:
Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

Background and Discussion:
The Conservation Commission reviewed and approved the 2023-25 budget development process and timeline at the March regular meeting. Following the April 12, 2022 all districts budget webinar we released a budget packages survey where we asked districts to identify their top operating and capital budget priorities. We asked districts to keep in mind the following:
Is this important to us? Do we have the data to back this up? Is this urgent?

Commission staff will bring forward recommendations, along with the priority ranking from the survey the districts are completing prior to the July commission meeting.
SCC will also be looking internally to ensure our FTE counts reflect the level of support our programs require.

Operating Budget Proposals

Conservation Technical Assistance The original decision package requested additional resources for conservation districts to implement incentive-based programs in a targeted approach. (would also include conservation education, targeted outreach, livestock TA)

Voluntary Stewardship Program Additional funding was requested to support completion of the plans and plan implementation. Funding also supports state agency participation in the technical panel as required by the VSP statute.
**Engineering**
This funding request was to provide financial support to partially fund the cost associated with maintaining the SCC PE program for each regional engineering area. (this would be over and above the $2,700,00 SCC received for FY 23)

**Natural Disaster Preparedness/Recovery**
Funding to help districts help landowners prepare for disasters or recover from them.

**Working Lands**
This proposal sought funding for four programs that support working lands viability:
- Vets on the Farm
- Food Systems/ Food Security/ Small Farms
- Farmland Preservation
- Energy Conservation / Climate Adaptation & Resiliency

**Ag Conservation Science**
To create an agriculture Conservation Science program, to coordinate with the conservation districts in the science of natural resource conservation. Results of research are translated to practical, on the ground implementation by conservation districts and landowners.

**Forest and Rangeland Health**
There is a critical need to engage with private landowners to enhance forest stewardship, implement wildfire preparedness and complete wildfire recovery. Conservation districts are ideally situated with strong working relationships with private landowners to assist in the on the ground work.

**Coordinated Resource Management**
Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) takes a Common Pool Resource approach to resolve community-based conflicts related to natural resources. Stakeholders form local coalitions who, with the assistance of trained, neutral facilitators, make decisions by consensus that often result in innovative, collaborative solutions. The Washington State CRM consists of state and federal partners that support local CRMs, most of which have strong district engagement. The CRM program used be funded through financial support by agency partners and had a part-time coordinator and funding to provide grants and training to district and agency staff involved in CRMs; but over the years, that funding model has not been sustainable. However, the need for CRMs is increasing.

**Capital Budget Proposals**

**Natural Resource Investments**
Requested funding would continue the natural resource investments project program with additional resources.

**CREP Riparian Planning TA & Cost Share**
This funding provides the necessary outreach, planning, and accountability needed to support the capital package for CREP, the state's largest riparian restoration program.
This request is to provide matching funds for project implementation to continue the CREP with private landowners. CREP is funded with approximately 80% federal funds. This request is for the 20% required match to these federal funds.

**Match for RCPP**
Funding would match available federal funding for several RCPP projects, including ongoing projects, recently awarded projects, and those conservation district led RCPPs anticipating awards shortly in the next RFP round.

**Shellfish Funding**
Requested funding would continue the shellfish project program with additional resources.

**Farmland Preservation**
Requesting funds to preserve farm and forest working lands.

**Farmland Protection & Land Access**
Requesting funds for the farmland protection & land access grant program.

**Irrigation Efficiencies**
Requested funding would continue the Irrigation Efficiencies Grants program with additional resources

**Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative**
The WA Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) steering committee (DFW, DNR, SCC) is supportive of SCC requesting $1.5M in capital funding for the 23-25 biennium to continue offering cost-share financial assistance for wildlife friendly fencing (WFF) projects in wildfire impacted areas. This type of work is currently being completed with pass through funding from WDFW to SCC. WFF projects would still be guided, evaluated and selected through the WSRRI process but would move a portion of the program implementation to an appropriation made directly to SCC.
TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Kate Delavan
    Farmland Preservation Coordinator

SUBJECT: Farmland Protection and Land Access Draft Guidelines

Summary:
The Conservation Commission (SCC) received $2 million in supplemental capital budget funding for the new Farmland Protection and Land Access program. Staff seek Commissioner authorization to disseminate the first draft of the FPLA guidelines to stakeholders. SCC staff will gather and consider feedback for the final draft of the guidelines. The final draft will be presented at the July 21 SCC Meeting.

Requested Action:
SCC staff requests that the Commission authorize Director Pettit to approve the dissemination of the first draft of the Farmland Protection and Land Access guidelines to conservation districts, land trusts, and other stakeholders for a 30-day review process.

Staff Contact:
Kate Delavan, kdelavan@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-6486

Background and Discussion:
The Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) program was awarded $2 million via proviso in the 2022 Supplemental Capital Budget (SSB 5651), Section 3050.

FPLA is the result of several years of stakeholder conversations and is broadly supported by the land trust and farmland protection community. Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) staff developed the concept for FPLA with input from stakeholders to complement the Buy-Protect-Sell category of FarmPAI, a program of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. FPLA
serves the dual purpose of permanently protecting high-quality farmland and facilitating access to
land for next generation farmers and ranchers.

FarmPAI provides conservation entities with low-interest loans for the fee-simple acquisition of at-risk farmland. FPLA grants fund the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement. The agricultural conservation easement ensures the land stays open and available for farming in perpetuity. By restricting or removing certain development rights that are incompatible with agriculture, the FPLA agricultural conservation easement makes the farm more affordable for the future farm owner.

Used in conjunction with FarmPAI, FPLA will result in the permanent protection of high-quality farmland at imminent risk of development and facilitate transfer to the next generation farmer.

The budget proviso states FPLA funds need to “support opportunities for all producers but shall prioritize: (a) conservation of high priority agricultural land at imminent risk of development; and (b) grants for the purchase of agricultural easements to historically underserved producers, as defined in 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022), including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans.”

**Connection to the 2022-2021 Strategic Plan**

FPLA aligns most closely with the Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food Systems Support priority area of the Strategic Plan. Specific draft objectives, goals, and tactics supported by or related to FPLA include:

- **Objective:** SCC assists in the completion of agricultural and forestland conservation easements.
  - OFP will pursue funding for the SCC’s farmland preservation account.
  - Tactic: SCC will explore development of a decision package to fund the SCC’s farmland preservation account and increase OFP staff capacity to implement the new program.
  - Tactic: SCC will engage with stakeholders for stakeholder interest in seeking funding for the account.

- **Objective:** OFP advances innovative tools for farmland protection and land access.
  - Strategy: SCC supports development of new land access tools/programs such as low-interest loans for conservation entities to facilitate Buy-Protect-Sale transactions.
  - Tactic: OFP acts as a program adviser to the newly created FarmPAI program at the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.
  - Tactic: OFP explores other potential mechanisms for resources to facilitate land access.

**FPLA Program Development Plan**

Staff identified the following process in order to launch the program in summer 2022:

- Develop draft guidelines
  - Seek public comment on draft guidelines
• Incorporate feedback and update guidelines
  • Develop communication plan, including application process
  • Present guidelines at July 21 Business Meeting for Commissioner consideration
  • Launch program in August 2022 or soon thereafter
  • Implement program through June 2023 or until funds runs out

Draft Guidelines
OFP staff developed an outline of the draft guidelines and identified key questions for consideration by SCC staff. Two internal teams have formed to advance the guidelines. The first team referred to as the Program Review Team is focused on programmatic questions and considerations (e.g. project selection process and criteria, easement terms, and SCC’s role in transaction). Commissioner Spaeth is participating in the Program Review Team in addition to SCC staff. The second team referred to as the Internal Fiscal/Contract Team is focused on contracting and financial process questions. This team consists of SCC staff.

Recommended Action and Options:
Staff recommend the following action:

SCC staff request that the Commission authorize Director Pettit to approve the dissemination of the first draft of the Farmland Protection and Land Access guidelines to conservation districts, land trusts, and other stakeholders for a 30-day review process.

Next Steps:
• The draft guidelines will be released to stakeholders for their feedback for a 30-day period.
• SCC staff will collect, organize, and share feedback with the two Review Teams.
• An updated draft will be developed and shared with Commissioners for consideration at the July Commission meeting.
• FPLA program is initiated once guidelines are approved.
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alison Halpern, Scientific Policy Advisor

SUBJECT: Sustainable Farms and Fields draft programmatic guidelines

Summary:
Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) is a new SCC grant program that was established in 2020 to increase implementation of climate-smart practices on agricultural, rangeland, and tidelands through voluntary incentives. SCC staff worked with partners at WSDA, WSU, and NRCS to develop draft programmatic guidelines. This draft and solicitation for comments were distributed through Gov.Delivery and via email to stakeholders who have expressed interest in the SFF program. Staff provided two webinars to review and discuss the guidelines 1 Apr and 15 Apr. Twenty-six respondents (21 through Survey Monkey and 5 via email) provided feedback during the 45-day comment period, which ran 23 Mar – 8 May. Staff reviewed comments and incorporated them into the draft guidelines when deemed appropriate.

Requested Action:
SCC staff requests that the Commission adopt this final draft of the SFF programmatic guidelines. SCC staff will revisit and adjust guidelines as needed after this first year of implementing the new program.

Staff Contact:
Alison Halpern, SCC Scientific Policy Advisor (ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556)

Background and Discussion:
The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program was created in statute during the 2020 session. It had strong bipartisan support and was lauded by a range of stakeholders. However, due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic uncertainty that followed, agencies were
advised against submitting FY 21-23 budget packages for new programs and there have been no appropriations for SFF.

The general foundation of the SFF program has already been created in statute (RCW 89.08.610- .635), and SCC staff has been consulting with partners at WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and elsewhere to expand upon that foundation to develop the first draft of the programmatic guidelines and to discuss challenges associated with climate-smart practices (e.g., soil carbon quantification).

SCC contracted with Dr. Lynne Carpenter-Boggs and her team at WSU to develop the initial Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system and a valuable FAQ page about GHG emissions and carbon sequestration.

SCC worked with a team from WSDA’s NRAS program on prioritization metric needs and solutions. Jadey Ryan compiled information about NRCS climate-smart practices, conducted background research on prioritization methodologies used in other programs, and developed an invaluable user-friendly dashboard (WA Climate Smart Estimator) using COMET metadata. This tool will be used when prioritizing proposed projects to compare different practices among different counties to help determine which projects will reduce the most GHG emissions or sequester the most carbon.

In addition to drafting initial guidelines, SCC staff has also been informing and updating the districts about SFF in presentations/webinars through WADE and CTD, providing SFF outreach to stakeholders, and pursuing federal funding opportunities for the program.

Recommended Action and Options:

Staff recommend the following action:

- Review and adopt the final draft SFF programmatic guidelines.

Next Steps:

- July: SFF program is initiated.
- SCC staff will revisit the programmatic guidelines after this first year’s funding is expended and make adjustments if needed to ensure the program continues to run smoothly during this early stage of implementation
- SCC codifies guidelines in the WAC after 3-5 years.
Section 1: Introduction and Overview of Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) Grant Program

Program Overview
Legislative Intent
Statutory authority
Definitions

Section 2: General Policies

Eligible Applicants
Administration of SFF Program
Application Timeline and Review Process
General Requirements

Section 3: Fundable Projects

Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices

Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects

Geographic Distribution
Commodity Distribution
Farm Size Distribution
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
Fish and Habitat Creation

Section 6: Reporting and the SFF Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) System
Section 1 - Comments received:

I have several constructive comments about the draft guidelines for the Sustainable Farms and Fields Program. Please make sure that energy efficiency upgrades to equipment, facilities, farming and ranching practices, and field operations are explicitly called out as fundable practices. Emmett Wild

Under Definitions: Climate Smart Practices - Does Agricultural Land include associated ag land? i.e. land on the farm but not under production due to terrain, etc? I have seen this land fall into a grey area for project eligibility, yet on our own farm it is one of the best served categories for conservation efforts, as it tends to be degraded and erosion prone. – Garrett Moon

Suggest that there be hybrid programs OR a program that encourages property owners to combine facets from various programs to achieve a greater more sustainable impact that fosters more complex systems using low impact design & construction designed to benefit local ecosystems and areas. – Robert Guercio

The SFF grant program is crucial to Washington's work against climate change and its ability to continue supporting rural jobs and feeding our population locally. By passing and funding this program, we can be an example to other states about just how impactful and positive farming practices can be. Additionally, as a person who would like to work in regenerative ocean farming, I love how forward thinking this program is in its inclusion of kelp and tidelands. – Hailey Lampe

Considerations:
1. Include an expanded statement on how climate-smart practices help producers save money in their farming operations.
2. Include a statement on transitioning to energy efficiencies and/or renewable energy sources in addition to a statement on reduced fossil fuel consumption. In some cases, it may make more sense for producers to utilize diesel-powered equipment but transition to renewable energy use elsewhere in the operation.
3. Consider addressing refrigerants and adding management practices (if not already developed by NRCS) for on-farm refrigerants.
4. Consider addressing food waste and adding management practices that reduce food waste (e.g., enhanced connections to local markets; growing/raising product that is needed to sustain/nourish local/regional communities).
5. Consider how sustainability and resiliency of our State’s agricultural lands are also essential to our national security. – Alexandra James
Does the program have benefits for soil health or regenerative agriculture (re: “The numerous co-benefits of these practices include improved air and water quality, and increased habitat for wildlife, pollinators, and fish.”)? Crop and soil benefits are mentioned in the Legislative Intent section, but not Program Overview.

Does peer-reviewed literature exist to back up this statement: “Moreover, these climate-smart practices help producers save money in their farming operations.”? This is a key point for producer adoption.

How is Farmer and Rancher defined? Is there a minimum amount of income that needs to be generated from Farming/Ranching? Or can it be based on land use regardless of whether it is a business? – Ryan Williams

is Forest part of definitions under Climate Smart practices-- I do not think it needs to be but I am sure that question will be asked. If part of farm farm forestry assn. may be eligible under ag land there are other opportunities for the average forest landowner.

under pollinators make sure honey bees stay included and bees cultivated for pollinators on seed crops, not just natives. – Dean Hallie

I had posed this question during the webinar, but was curious if projects that enhanced native pollinator habit would be more competitive than projects that enhanced non-native habitat (perhaps more geared towards honey bee production). It’s now my understanding that all pollinator habitat projects are viewed with equal competitiveness under this grant – Brian Muegge

Under "Pollinator habitat" on Pg. 3, please revise as follows: ".... as determined by the department of agriculture in coordination with the department of fish and wildlife.” – Mike Kuttel Jr.

If this document is something that will be utilized by other public entities should be some background information about SCC and CDs to inform others of the relationship between those entities. Consider adding reference to RCW 89.08 “Conservation Districts Law” and the establishment of conservation districts throughout the state with SCC as the supporting state agency to provide CDs with financial change and operational support. Reference to RCW 89.08.070 as well. – Loren Meager

Section 2: General Policies

Section 2 - Comments received:
Great

The guidelines state the funds must have started to be used within 120 days of being allocated to the producer. What if the climate smart practice the producer is going to be doing won’t be starting until after 120 days since he gets the funds? For example, what if the is putting in a cover crop but he won’t be putting it in until the fall and he gets the funds in the spring? - Britton Baker

The intent is understood but this could be a problem in the case of engine powered equipment. The oldest engines are the ones that need replacement the most as they pollute the most by far. With the sky high cost of tractors, combines etc today forcing a new purchase rather than a repower will leave a lot of farmers stuck. Also many especially family farms favor older equipment they are ALLOWED to work on vs new. - Rod Gleysteen, rod@pacificcc.cc

Not including electrical and equipment upgrades and making everything as “equitable” as possible without some discretion may spread the funding too thin to have a Capital Press worthy impact. If the SFF is funded at $2M, by the time they take their 5% for administration, 15% for program build-out, and then applicants take their 25% for TA support, that leaves only $1.2M for projects. Divide that by 7 different categories or eligible applicant types, commodities categorization, farm size categorization, and geographic distribution and there would be hardly anything left for an impactful project sponsored by any given applicant.

Did you consider that it may be more efficient to let CDs be the sole applicants for this funding, or at least require a portion of funding within a Conservation District’s boundaries be provided to the District if expected to support a project? Avoid situations like we have in the Skagit VSP program where we are expected to implement VSP but don't receive any of the VSP funding for staff time. There are other factors as well, such as CD staff being familiar with how CPDS works, and thus efficient in entering and managing projects. Likewise, CD staff are knowledgeable about vouchering, invoicing, cultural resource approval processes, CPDS contracts, board approval, and all the myriad other steps required for a successful application and implementation process. Do WSCC staff have the time to train and sustain a myriad of other applicants on how to use the system and make sure they have all the boxes checked to be successfully reimbursed for their project? Skagit CD took over the Nookachamps RCPP from Skagit County after the county was unable to utilize CPDS or complete WSCC reporting requirements in a satisfactory manner; additionally, the County attorney imposed BMP requirements above and beyond those allowable under NRCS practice standards, which will likely be a common thread from other agencies like Department of Ecology (think buffer sizes), leading to a patchwork of different rules and access to funding, depending on the applicant; in theory, a landowner could go to DOE, get denied for a SFF grant for a narrow buffer, then go to their local CD and get the same SFF dollars through them. Using CDs as the primary applicant will also help to foster greater collaboration between applicants and agencies.

For work on DNR lands, how is DNR approval to be relayed to the grant committee? Formal letter? DNR contact entered into CPDS? Is this the same for lands owned by WDFW, a county, a municipality, a school board, Department of Transportation, or any other public entity? – Emmett Wild

There’s a paragraph detailing that the purchase of equipment used to implement a cost-share project should be new or less than 2 years old. With high equipment costs and low
availability, I don't know that dictating this is helpful for public entities, and it definitely isn't for farmers partnering with them. And it isn't clear who this applies to. A requirement to purchase new equipment is quite at odds with the paragraph above on considering the applicant's financial situation. – Garrett Moon

I love what your doing! Thank you – Robert Guercio

Do cooperators have to have a farm plan in place to participate?
• For the practicality of being able to use this funding in as many ways as possible, not requiring landowners to have an ISP already in place would be more flexible use of funds. Money could be used to support our TA and entry-point customers toward getting an ISP and thereby establishing baseline data, for more farms. The vision being (in the form of a question): To what degree can districts provide not an ISP or FMP but a CMP – Carbon Management Plan - for landowners? Is this a slight modification/addition to what we are already doing? We might adaptively manage our VSP Climate Goals as well by picking a handful of metrics for landowner carbon emissions/sequestration to track with each plan and prescribing BMPs accordingly.

What support will be provided for developing an application that includes an “estimated CO2 reduction equivalent using COMET Planner.”
• Can we link to an established improvement for practices we commonly recommend as they list on reporting section? As we look at this it will be interesting to see how clearly it is linked to our BMP practices. Is there already an analysis of best “bang for our buck” practices carbon wise and also what is practical to implement and monitor?
• Would collaboration across smaller districts be appropriate?

Is there an established protocol for considering farmer income and using a “cost share resolution establishing a sliding scale based on landowner income”
• What best practices will be recommended for gathering and storing cooperator financial data and will a sliding scale be created that can be shared across smaller districts?
• $100,000 per landowner is not likely to be enough to do very large projects given the increase in fuel, supplies, remote location and lack of labor etc. – Angie Shephard

It is very helpful that conservation districts, universities, and other public municipalities can apply for funds; these spaces can impact many people. However, I think it's imperative that small and medium sized farms are prioritized in the grant distribution as those are businesses that often have the least amount of access to support. I also think it’s key that funds are set aside for education and public outreach. The more folks who support positive farming practices, the greater the overall impact will be. – Hailey Lampe

Considerations
1. Limit eligible entities to those that have the technical expertise to directly assist in practice implementation or who have demonstrated a partnership with such an entity in their application. E.g., If a city does not have staff that have the expertise to assist in direct implementation of practices, then they must successfully demonstrate the entity they wish to contract to do this work in their application for funding. Also, consider limiting applicants to those that already provide direct technical assistance to producers to alleviate confusion on who/where producers should go if they’re interested in the program.
2. Clarify the administration of the SFF program section. Will the SCC retain 15% of the available funding per fiscal year to implement/develop the program? Or will the SCC retain 15% of the funds actually awarded each year?
3. Expand on the 5% administrative costs. What do these costs include? Again, is it 5% of the total funding available for the program that is retained or is 5% retained from the actual amount awarded?

4. Expand on what it means for the SCC to seek maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other sources of money? Does that mean that the SCC will actively work to secure more funds to grow the overall grant funding amount? Or, does it mean that the SCC will maximize the benefits of the grant program by identifying other programs that applicants can pursue to help fund their project? Etc.

5. Clarify the application submission timeline and review process. Can applicants submit application materials on a rolling basis throughout the fiscal year? If so, the SCC should consider a defined open application timeframe to better align with the policies described further down in the document (e.g., practices must be completed no later than June 30 of each year; projects must be underway within 120 days of the funding allocation). SCC should consider an annual application deadline of April 1 or incentivize earlier applications by awarding a higher percentage of the available funds prior to January 1 of each year, for example.

6. Expand upon or include the ranking rubric.

7. Clarify whether applicants apply on behalf of producers or whether they can apply for a general amount of funds to support an X amount of identified practices.

8. Clarify the statement “conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers.” Do these farmers need to be pre-identified in the application?

9. Clarify the cost-share maximum per landowner by including an example scenario where the landowner receives the total $100,000 (i.e., include an example budget of the landowner compensation, the staff-retained overhead, the SCC-retained educational awareness cost or program implementation cost, and the SCC-retained administrative cost).

10. If a landowner may only receive up to $100,000 don’t consider a producer’s financial situation. This may de-incentivize participation and doesn’t really address the goals of the program.

11. Clarify the 100% demonstration of climate-smart technologies one-time basis statement. Is this one-time per fiscal year or one-time only in the applicant’s history?

12. Include statement on what happens if practices are not completed by June 30 of each year.

13. RE equipment age. Perhaps consider working condition of the equipment rather than age/mileage. Maybe you can require that equipment identified for purchase must pass a mechanical inspection and have less than X number of hours on the engine, etc. – Alexandra James

Eligible Applicants: Are conservation district projects prioritized versus other public entities?

Application timeline and review process: Will funding be allocated based on a first-come, first-served method? Will a specific number of projects be selected each month by the review committee based on size and location? Can a project that was not funded be resubmitted in a future month in the same fiscal year? Can a project that was not funded be resubmitted in a future fiscal year?

General Requirements: DNR leased land approval – does the same apply to Federally leased lands?

For equipment share, will be you able to provide example language for the ILA and policy? Same for cost share policies with financial considerations included. – Ryan Williams
With multiple entities open to apply, need consistency through section using the same term such as applicant and recipient so others do not see as districts being favored. Encourage applicants to partner on applications within geographic region or commodity instead of competing. WACD or district representation is needed in review process. Make allowance for projects that need multi-year especially when the growing season does not fit into the budget year to have priority in the next round of funding to complete project. Allow for crop or demonstration projects to be split installation and completion. May have to have stipulation that the landowner must complete project if funding not available the next budget year. Cost share rates need to be set by commission or to ensure fair distribution of funds especially the sliding scale component.

Equipment requirement newer only for combustion power units, that have emission controls, Overhead 25% salary and benefits recipients staff

Demo project should be more than new and innovative include practices established in other areas just not in the proposed area. and remove 1 time basis – Dean Hallie

Have other public entities work with conservation districts on SFF projects.

Meet the funding needs at conservation district level first. – Craig

COMET Planner and COMET Farm are going to continue to be exceedingly helpful tools for IPM Planners and farmers alike to utilize, and I’m very much in support of projects that score higher on the COMET system should be prioritized.

Regarding that 120 day window to begin work on the funding allocation I think is a great window for CDs to work in. I know that staffing/funding shortages can cause quite a delay in project implementation, but at least this would give a sizable window to begin work. – Brian Muegge

Considering our VSP program experience in the Skagit our office is having to spend a lot of time supporting the County VSP program yet we don’t receive any of that funding for our staff to support their program. I suggest the Commission consider having the option to reserve a percentage of project funding going to a third party applicant within a district boundary if that CD is named as a participating stakeholder as happened in our VSP program. Thanks again for the opportunity to comment – Bill Blake

Under Application section: Why was a 1-year cycle chosen instead of a biennial cycle? Time constraints could prove a barrier to producers in implementing based on permit delays, etc. that reduce the amount of timeline for actual implementation.

Under General Requirements: (1) first line: add "conservation practice" to read "... must meet NRCS conservation practice standards and specifications..."; (2) suggest linking "13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy" text to online pdf; (3) Change the link for "NRCS design lifespan" to go to the document on WA NRCS eFOTG which showcases specifically the practice and its lifespan instead of all the extra info in the current link; (4) 2nd paragraph: "a similar SCC-approved model" - how would one know who to consult for an alternative approved model?; (5) "SCC Conservation Practice Data System" should link to the CPDS webpage; (6) 4th paragraph: "and other public entities" - will CDs be given preference?; (6) 5th paragraph: "landowner" perhaps add "or operator" for more inclusion – Heather McCoy
1) Consider clarifying “Conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves several farmers.” In the webinar on 4/15/22, it was stated that it would be acceptable for entities to submit more than one Sustainable Farms & Fields grant proposal.

2) Guidelines state “Work must be underway within 120 days of the funding allocation…. Does “underway” mean planned/contracted, or that implementation has started? I'm concerned that period may be too short for some agricultural practices depending on the time of year when the funds are awarded. – Tammi Stubbs

WDFW leases land to agricultural producers. On Pg. 5, please revise as follows: "Any applications involving state lands leased from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) must include the department's approval in the application." – Mike Kuttel Jr.

For the way this funding it laid out eligible applicants should be Conservation Districts (CDs) or CDs with other entities. Not other entities solo.

The purchase of equipment to implement climate smart practices new or less than 2 years old, needs to be addressed and loosen. Availability of said equipment likely to be impractical and uneconomical for most operations. Most things on our personal farm’s implementation is 15-25 years old and out of the Midwest. Equipment is very hard to find and 6-10 times the cost in the PNW

Funds for 1-time demonstrations, with the reality of learning curve and reliability, one time use is going to have very little adoption rate by producers. A longer more repeatable demonstrations once the learning curve is passed would have a lot higher adoption rate.

Work must be underway within 120 days; many of the implemented projects are seasonal and may only be implemented once a year and out of the 120-day window.

A realization of the numbers if you do the math backwards; max of 20% to a single applicant/year, max $100K per applicant/year. There should be in $500K in the pool. With the cost of many pieces of equipment are looking at $60-80K minimum, applicants are going to be pushing that regularly. – Will Bowdish

I know the intent is for farmers to bundle their applications within a CD application - However couldn’t a Farm apply as an individual farm under the legislation? Seems like including Businesses to this list especially corporate farms as direct applications makes sense – Couldn’t Darigold, Taylor Shellfish apply for a grant? Feel like the local family farm also should be able to apply individually if they prefer that over partnering with other grants via the CD, but assume all farms have some sort of business license so would be eligible if businesses were added to this list.

Are multi-year projects possible – Wondering how your consider a soil enhancement project “complete” maybe this is more about awarded funds must be spent – not project completed – Still a question about multi-year projects but maybe it is done as two separate awards each fiscal year that could get pre-approved upon application. – Greg Rock

Why not the beginning of each biennium. This would allow for projects that can’t meet a fiscal year schedule.

Similar to above comment. Taking an application during the middle of a growing season and expecting it to be approved and implemented prior to the end of the next growing season is problematic.
WDFW is not included in the legislation and should be removed from review committee. While WDFW are valuable partners, this program is not wildlife/fish focused as passed by the legislature.

[re: sliding-scale suggestion for cost-sharing] This is not feasible. Even though this is not required, it is an unreasonable expectation for Districts to start evaluating landowner income.– Mark Nielson

Will SFF allow for vendors/subapplicants (e.g. nonprofits) that aren't listed here?

Is SFF for landowners only? There are renters/those that hold leases for farmland that would still benefit from this program. I’ve heard from the Latinx community that landownership is a real barrier for participation in these types of programs.– Nick Cusick

Section 2: General Policies

SFF Program topic: Eligible Applicants

RCW 89.08.615 states “As funding allows, the commission shall distribute funds, as appropriate, to conservation districts and other public entities to help implement the projects approved by the commission.”

Concern: The draft guidelines make funding available to all government entities without establishing a full grant administration process. Developing and administering that will drive up program expense. It is appropriate to prioritize routing the SFF funding through CD’s because conservation districts are the established go to resource for farmers and ranchers to access financial support and technical assistance to implement conservation practices. Many CD’s have already initiated soil health outreach efforts. Maximize SFF program effectiveness meeting existing private landowner need through the CD’s before funding other entities such as counties, cities and municipalities that aren’t as specialized at delivering conservation to private landowners. CD’s have established programs and relationships to successfully implement the goals of this program.

Conservation Districts and SCC operate under RCW 89.08 and with SCC’s Conservation Accountability and Performance Program. There is an established system for putting conservation funding out on the ground through CDs. The CD-SCC relationship makes for a very efficient, effective and accountable conservation delivery system.

Developing and administering a grant program to entities outside of that system will consume considerable SCC resources. The best way to serve farmers and ranchers with the same level of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability available through CD’s is to require other public entities to work through their local conservation district to access available SFF funding. This arrangement is likely the most likely and suitable way to accomplish the legislative intent for “the commission shall distribute funds, as appropriate, to conservation districts and other public entities”.

SFF Program topic: Administration of the SFF program

Please consider utilizing a portion of the 15% of funds for education and awareness to implement a training program for CD staff across the state to become more informed of carbon sequestration and footprint reduction BMP’s. This will help with accomplishing geographic distribution of funds across the state and with leveraging funds through CD grant applications to other funding sources.

SFF Program topic: Application Timeline and Review Process

Concern: The legislature calls on 4 agencies along with SCC to maximize leveraging of funds. The guidelines should but does not call out that responsibility of the other four agencies to provide assistance to maximize leveraging of funds.

The draft SFF policy states:
"The SCC shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other sources of money, such as state, nonstate, public, and private." 

RCW 89.08.620 states: 

"When prioritizing grant recipients, the commission, in consultation with the department of agriculture, Washington State University, the department of fish and wildlife, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money."

The intent is focused on SCC consulting with other entities to maximize program benefits through leveraging more so than working with other entities for ranking. The guidelines should call out this consultation process to maximize benefits rather than place all the burden on SCC. Additionally, consider requiring other entities to bring match when working with CD partners to apply for SFF funds.

SFF Program topic: Application timeline and review process

Concern: Review process could become delay and reduce implementation window from 12 months to 9 or less. Legislative intent to consult with other agencies to increase leveraging of funds is being mistakenly interpreted as a requirement for a multi-agency review and ranking process.

RCW 80.08.620 identifies WSDA, WSU, WDFW and NRCS to be consulted with to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other funds.

We suggest the format of the consultation is providing an opportunity for other agencies to review and comment for SCC consideration. Setting up a monthly review of projects with four other agencies participating sets the stage for delays and difficulty finding consensus and is not a requirement of the legislation.

We recommend providing an opportunity for these entities to provide comments/recommendations and SCC to rank rather than creating an overly cumbersome and time-consuming ranking process. If warranted the ranking process could be made more rigorous in the future.

Add CD representation on the ranking committee. CD's are the direct link to on the ground implementation and have a lot to offer with respect to landowner needs, project feasibility and likelihood for project success.

Concern: 12 months is a limited time frame for implementation. Revise the review process to notify applicants of funding prior to funding availability so that applicants have a full 12 months for implementation.

Operating funds only allow 1 year to complete projects. Consider allowing grant applications to be submitted in the fiscal year prior to funding. Projects could be ranked and applicants ready for award at the beginning of the fiscal year to allow 12 full months for implementation.

SFF Program topic: General Requirements

Concern: Not all potential project opportunities are covered by current established BMPs. Develop a waiver process to allow carbon sequestration / Carbon footprint reduction practices that aren’t covered by existing NRCS or SCS approved BMP’s. Or add a fast-track approval process to add to the SCC-approved practices. There are likely new or different approaches to carbon sequestration and reduction of carbon footprint that are covered in established BMP’s. – Loren Meager

We see a tremendous opportunity for an education/outreach component. The first is the typical outreach activities encouraged by the conservation district to make cooperators aware of the program goals/benefits along with the assistance available. The second is a larger more regional approach through a Cowlitz county driven process to “spread the Bio”. Cowlitz County Public Works is spearheading an effort to utilize bio-solids to amend dredge spoil soils to realize the reclamation desired, but unattained, from river dredging activities. The intent of the project is to amend soils and establish woody riparian vegetation on dredge spoil deposits in the Cowlitz and Toutle Rivers as
Section 3: Fundable Projects

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Section 3 - Comments received:

Many of these programs duplicate USDA programs is the intent to allow double dipping? - Rod Gleysteen
How will ongoing annual payments be managed? How will this work contractually for overlapping state fiscal biennium dates? Will money be set aside lump-sum from a given-year’s budget for all years of the annual payment as contracted or will annual payments be made each year from the latest pot of funds? What if the SFF program is not funded in a given year? Would annual payments then be defaulted on? Will annual payments be locked in at a rate determined in the beginning year of the contract or will it scale with inflation or maintenance expenses annually? If that is all in the grants manual already great, but if not it would be good to have a few CD’s comment on those questions. As always I appreciate the opportunity to comment and work with the Commission to deliver the best programs possible that serve our customer’s needs. – Emmett Wild

Who is verifying the carbon storage? – April Thatcher

I am willing to work on a pilot project combining short & long term tiny home housing with integrated biodynamic farming, pasture, orchards and agricultural tourism that supports biodiversity and local ecosystems. Encourages long term alternatives to conventional property development and housing. I own 10 acres in Neilton @ 50 Burn Road and am willing to invest in a project like this one. – Robert Guercio

Will activities include the following? These are ideas our district has been discussing

• General composting – reduction of methane – very climate smart but not specifically listed – they list anaerobic digestion but what about aerobic digestion (Nutrient Mgmt 590)
• Biochar application – is it inherently included in another line item?
• Biochar production from woody debris - (Practice 808)
• Thinning practices for healthier forests and better co2 retention?(Practice 384 Woody Residue Treatment and 666 Thinning
• General technical assistance (TA) to landowners such as the development of site-specific conservation plans to increase climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Will there be any opportunity across districts to bundle innovative climate smart practices implemented to illustrate a demonstration project at a larger scale?

• There is an expressed desire to serve smaller and more diverse farms and that might require a collaborative approach with more technical assistance funding as those producers have less resources and access to capital etc.
• For example, energy efficiency upgrades (lights, plate coolers, water heaters, alley scrapers, electric pumps, etc.) can be implemented immediately at low cost and start providing measurable benefits immediately. The results could roll together easily could show the reach of districts throughout the state and the power of many small changes. – Angie Shephard

In Section 2, it states if business owners must purchase equipment to implement the new practices, the equipment must be less than 2 years old, lightly used, and in good working order. This seems quite limiting. New equipment can be very expensive, meaning farmers often take on more debt to purchase it. Reusing old equipment is also very climate friendly in terms of resource use. If these guidelines for purchasing equipment are going to remain, I think funding for the equipment should be included in fundable projects. Or, low interest loans should be included. Or, equipment libraries should be greatly expanded. – Hailey Lampe

Considerations:
1. Include infrastructure costs to store equipment purchased for equipment sharing. Where is the shared equipment stored? Consider adding cost-share for building an equipment shed or building if one does not exist.

2. Include costs for transitioning to climate-smart technologies or training for climate-smart equipment and technologies. – Alexandra James

Purchase of supplies: Will the program fund soil sampling relating to the specific project’s site implementation (e.g., soil sample to determine necessary amendments or the most appropriate seed/seedlings, etc.)?

Cost-sharing: Would the program cover certification fees for ecolabels, such as Salmon Safe or LIVE certified, if the farm installs a carbon storage / climate-smart practice?

Other equipment purchases or financial assistance: Would certification fees for ecolabels, such as Salmon Safe or LIVE certified, be covered under this category pending current management practices demonstrate carbon sequestration? Will the program cover costs of contracting with groups that can translate materials into a language that is significantly represented in the community? For example, translate English materials to Spanish, or build a Cultural Ambassador Program where Spanish-speaker can translate program information during a site visit. – Ryan Williams

All good here but reads like only districts can purchase and share equipment. – Dean Hallie

Allow cost share on equipment purchases without having case by case review by SCC. – Craig

The funding of Technical Assistance to growers to implement climate smart practices is going to really open the floodgates. Removing more financial barriers will hopefully spur so many more growers to enact these climate-smart changes – Brian Muegge

I do think that conversion from fossil fuel based equipment such as tractors and pumps should be considered for reduced GHG emissions as those are easy baby steps towards initial acceptance of needed change. Also probably going to be harder to get old school diesel powered equipment within a decade. – Bill Blake

Under Technical Assistance: reading the last line, "increase usage of precision agricultural practices" suggests Nutrient Management Plans - so can CDs apply solely for climate smart focused work without a project being implemented?? – Heather McCoy

Consider making it clear that a program for annual carbon storage payments is under development and not part of the current funding opportunity. – Tami Stubbs

There is also an allowance for contracting annual carbon storage on a retrospective Ton-year basis which would not require any long-term contract. That said it would ideally come with a long-term payment schedule (beyond a biennium) so it would have to be explained that future payments would be contingent on future appropriations – But personally I would rather build out a lot of good actors – that are in the ton-year payment program - that are keeping doing the same good work every year in exchange for a small annual payment – than award them a payment for expected benefits over a 10+ year period all upfront with the expectation of enforcing a contract and future behaviors.
Note: I have been working on an academic paper with a UW doctorate on this issue and we continue to come to the conclusion that if we are working with a 100 year study period for global warming potentials, like Methane, and N20 that applying a linear model to carbon storage over that same study period resulting in 1 ton year of carbon storage having $1/100^{th}$ the value of emitting one ton of carbon is a fairly accurate and simple method for approximating the relative radiative forcing effects and a retrospective annual reward for storing one ton of carbon for one year (molecular mass adjusted for the missing O2) compared to avoiding one ton of CO2 emissions – Greg Rock

Section 3: Fundable Projects
Concern: All program areas identified in legislation should be eligible for funding. Allow upfront payments for contracted carbon storage. This could be utilized by CD’s to incentive participation in CREP or similar projects. Include penalties for default due to negligence on the part of the recipient. – Loren Meager
Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices

Section 4 - Comments received:

I saw the legislature identified equipment in their intent statement so shouldn't allowable practices include electrical conversion from diesel powered equipment and all other manner of practices that would be considered eligible for funding as the result of a USDA energy audit? This would include electric pumps replacing diesel or PTO pumps, upgrades to lighting, new plate coolers, more efficient water heaters, automated alley scrapers (replacing tractor scraping), and upgrades to more efficient waste separation and handling technology (waste separation facilities, centrifuges, etc.). Likewise, energy audits themselves should be funded to speed up the process of accessing Sustainable Farm and Field or EQIP funding for transition to more efficient energy using systems. If an anaerobic digester is an approved practice, why not installation of solar panels? All these tools provide direct value to the producer in their efforts of providing a commodity to the market with a lower carbon footprint than they produced prior to the change in practice. Easily measured and certainty in delivering reduced carbon footprint.

Please review my note in section 2 regarding different requirements imposed by different applicant agencies above and beyond NRCS practice standards – Emmett Wild

Are you providing incentive payments (like the CSP/NRCS program) for those of us already implementing carbon smart practices? For instance, how does this grant help farmers like me who are already increasing soil organic matter through cover crops and reduced tillage, mulching, utilizing grassways, utilizing solar arrays for farm energy usage, etc.?

I would like to see some financial support for early adopters. Via farm walks, promotion, etc. we are instrumental in helping other producers envision how such programs will work on their farms/operations.

What about fossil fuel energy use reductions/inventory practices via NRCS? It would be good to have electric tractors to be an eligible expense. – April Thatcher

Grazing and Pasture: In our open country, with almost no fencing in place, that lack is one of the biggest barriers to livestock incorporation into cropping cycles, and the benefits that follow. Cost sharing on fencing is almost a prerequisite for any project to be feasible here. – Garrett Moon

Minimal damage to footprint. Centralized community micro grids. – Robert Guercio

I have no concerns about the eligible practices. They are all fantastic and should be included in the final draft. – Hailey Lampe

Considerations:
1. Include practices that address refrigerants and food-waste reduction.
2. Include practices that address social aspects of sustainability like farm-worker well-being (e.g., mental and physical wellness practices).
3. Include practices that focus on quality over quantity (e.g., product quality over product yields). Many of the listed practices contribute to enhanced product quality already but it may be important to create a new category that lists specific practices that accelerate/contribute most to enhanced product quality (e.g., soil health practices; grazing; livestock feed without corn or soy; raising heritage breeds; growing perennials).

4. Include water-smart practices. – Alexandra James

Soil Health: Can the program fund community gardens (e.g., cost-share to establish raised beds where additional soil health practices are implemented)?

Eligible Projects: Will this list be updated as the NRCS lists are updated? If so, might include language that this list is not exhaustive and will be based on the linked lists plus SCC approved practices. – Ryan Williams

Great - Dean Hallie

Provide more information about forestry related practices. – Craig

Consider adding wetland restoration practices as they are considered carbon sinks and provide multiple other ecosystem services supporting climate resiliency – Bill Blake

Will you be providing demonstrable ranking of how carbon practices may be most advantageous utilizing the CPPE? Also, perhaps consider reorganizing the practice lists by SWAPA-HE and resource concern categories (& link to pdf). Seems like a few practices are missing - what about Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643), Waste Transfer (634), Waste Storage Facility (313), Compost Facility (317), and Heavy Use Area Protection (561)? These last 4 are all complimentary and necessary practices when working to increase precision ag and reduce emissions/increase soil carbon sequestration through proper nutrient management using on-farm generated animal manure. Also, most listed practices are vegetative/structural in nature - should some behavioral practices also be added?

2 typos: (1) Under Grazing and Pasture, should read "Pasture and Hay Planting (CPS 512)" and (2) Under Agroforestry, should read "Windbreak Shelterbelt Renovation (CPS 650)" – Heather McCoy

There are a few additional practices that we thought might be helpful to include: Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315) to assist with pollinator habitat establishment; Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643) that would help cost-share forb plugs; and Fence (382) that would be helpful for implementation of Prescribed Grazing. – Tami Stubbs

**Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices**

Concern: Not all potential project opportunities are covered by current established BMPs. Develop a waiver process to allow carbon sequestration / Carbon footprint reduction practices that aren’t covered by existing NRCS or SCS approved BMP’s. Or add a fast-track approval process to add to the SCC-approved practices. There are likely new or different approaches to carbon sequestration and reduction of carbon footprint that are covered in established BMP’s. – Loren Meager
Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects

Section 5 - Comments received:

Project prioritization: Please share the rubric by which you intend to evaluate projects, how often, and who specifically will be on the review committee. Please allow the opportunity to comment and provide changes to the rubric prior to implementation to assure prioritization questions represent the diversity in customers we serve across the state.

Increasing carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits: Again, please include improvements to farmstead infrastructure like upgrades to lights, pumps, refrigeration, water heaters, alley-scrapers, and plate coolers to be considered here. Improvements in this sector are infinitely more accountable because reduction in emissions/use are easily able to be measured.

Commodity distribution: Again, this may prove counter to pursuing the biggest impact bang for the buck. Many crops like cereal grains, strawberries, hay/silage, vegetable/herb, and pasture are rotated through to other crops annually. How would a practice like conservation crop rotation be affected by this? Dairy and livestock industries also utilize significant acreage of cropland for manure application and feed production, plus trading and rotating fields with other crop producers; their management is not isolated to a single commodity category. Shouldn’t we be pursuing funding of projects that have the greatest impact, whatever crop that may be? Suppose one commodity type has a lot more room for improvement; this one should be prioritized over commodity categories where upgrades will have a smaller total impact. If it is truly about sustainability and climate what about other factors like smart water usage with maximum carbon sequestration continued production through drought years as a priority?

Farm size distribution: Why now is it necessary for WSCC or CDs to consider the income of a producer when that has not been the case in the recent past? NRCS only caps producer income at $900,000/yr AGI and makes no other income related queries. Asking producers questions about their income is sure to be a disincentive to participation in this program and is inconsistent with the goals and objectives of Conservation Districts. A producer that has high income may have high expenditures, so recording income alone is not a fair evaluation of someone’s financial independence. To move the needle on climate change, we need to take action on the most cost effective, readily implementable, and measurable projects, and these often are influenced by economies of scale and larger operations and acreages. A no-till drill still costs $40,000 or more, whether you use it on a 2-acre small farm or a 200-acre larger farm; more climate benefits can be realized on a larger acreage, not only because of a per acre improvement, but because of economies of scale. Creating a sliding scale of compensation based on someone’s income is counterproductive. I recommend removing the directive to encourage consideration of landowner’s financial situation and create sliding scales of cost-share rates.

Again, using metrics like farm size as a delimiter for eligibility and spread of grant resources will not allow projects to be equally ranked on their positive climate impacts. The objective should be to prioritize projects with the highest carbon reduction result over time, rather than projects that will have de minimis carbon impacts. – Emmett Wild
What do you mean by “precision agriculture practices”? The use of herbicides should not be allowed as a climate smart practice due to the resulting degradation of soil health.

Re commodity distribution: Highly functioning diversified operations need to be specifically identified and rewarded for the multiplying effect these more complex agricultural systems require. For instance, many mixed livestock + row crops operations significantly reduce emissions because there are fewer off farm inputs purchased and there is better closed loop nutrient cycling. (Manure is composted/utilized on crop fields, and crops are fed to livestock.) – April Thatcher

I disagree with the classification of farms, even farm size, is best accomplished by acreage. That is not a fair or even particularly relevant metric without considering the commodity, climate, and availability of irrigation water.

As an example: 75 acres of dry farmed wheatland, or 100 acres of shrub steppe sheep grazing land would be considered "large" farms. But if located in the driest climate zones of the state, without water rights, there is no way for either to be economically viable as a standalone farm, if at all.

Likewise, just 9 acres of organic blueberries or other high value crops is not a small farm in terms of revenue.

Climate and water availability matter tremendously. Much more than acreage. – Garrett Moon

Need more integrated pilot projects that are living instructional tools for those who want to do the right thing but lack knowledge and network etc. – Robert Guercio

I have no concerns about the prioritization of projects. They are all fantastic and should be included in the final draft. – Hailey Lampe

Considerations:
1. Define who at SCC, WSDA, WSU, WDFW, and NRCS will participate on the review committee (title, not necessarily names). Clarify how these positions are filled (e.g., designated, volunteered, elected). Define review committee commitment (e.g., same committee for entire fiscal year?). Define what expertise each agency will contribute to the review process.
2. It will be hard to compare an application that solely focuses on equipment purchases versus an application that focuses on transitioning to regenerative ag practices. Both have potential to reduce GHG emissions but on a much different timescale. Consider prioritizing projects that have a greater long-term effect on sequestering carbon and reducing GHGs. For example, helping a farm transition to, and implement, regenerative agricultural practices may have a much greater impact over a longer period than helping a farmer purchase a more fuel-efficient piece of equipment.
3. Give prioritization to applicants that plan to purchase equipment from local businesses and/or that are made regionally or within the U.S.
4. Prioritize projects whose producers sell to local/regional markets (versus those that export abroad).
5. Consider economic output or sales for “farm size” instead of acres. There are farms that only utilize a percentage of the actual farm area to grow/raise products. For example, a farm
may encompass a 100-acre parcel but only 20-acres are in active pasture; the remaining 80 may not be used for farming at all. A small farm could be considered a farm that generates $50,000 or less in annual sales, instead of a 1–9-acre farm, for example.

6. Don’t focus so much on equitable geographic distribution, farm size, or commodity type. Fund the most compelling projects that could make the most difference and that also support local economies. – Alexandra James

Commodity Distribution: Are hobby farms eligible (e.g., small family farm whose primary income is an occupation other than farming; livestock for personal use; livestock such as horses)? Are apiarists eligible? Are hops and/or industrial hemp farms eligible?

Farm Size Distribution: general comment to take into account to distribute funds equally/fairly - many farms in Chelan Co. are less than 10 acres. The tree fruit farms tend to be medium to large-scale farms. This farm size is very different than Okanogan and Douglas Counties.

I concur with the DEI, Fish & Pollinator Habitat, and Partnerships ranking scenarios. – Ryan Williams

This section concerning as many parameters to make distribution fair can make it very complicated. Like the term fair take out the must be. Increasing carbon sequestration should be 1, geographic distribution #2 but regions should be tweaked to represent major commodity of the region. Farm size by acres and $$ very subjective across state and commodities. Do not agree with the table for acres no suggestion for state wide but for our region small is less than 50 medium 50 to 300 300 and up for farming multiply by 10 for grazing livestock operations. Projects that damage fish and habitat should not be funded -- would be interested in a scenario where it could be acceptable to convince our environmentalists. Partnership agree with if possible require other entities to offer partnership especially for admin to make life easier for Commission hate to see districts competing with local entities – Dean Hallie

Leave prioritization to SCC and CD representatives. – Craig

Fantastic to see BIPOC and other traditionally underserved groups get prioritized for this. This could continue to support and expand our current work with Yakama Nation and CTIUR. – Brian Muegge

Hi, I would suggest adding additional points for carbon sequestration and/or GHG reduction projects that provide multiple functions that support other ecosystem functions. Example of sediment reduction through cover crop or no-till activity, wetland or riparian projects that sequester carbon and recover salmon. – Bill Blake

First paragraph: (1) define "DEI"; (2) what are the primary metrics to be used? What are your scoring procedures/tools?

Under Increasing carbon dioxide...: First sentence: will you be utilizing the CPPE as well? CPPE should be a "second check" to ensure that selected BMPs address specific resource concerns trending positive in terms of impact (not negative) – Heather McCoy
Under "Fish and Pollinator Habitat Creation:" WDFW supports higher ranking of projects that create riparian buffers or other fish habitat enhancements or pollinator habitat and downgrading projects that damage habitat. – Mike Kuttel Jr.

I feel that Walla Walla county is as a majority more similar to the Southeast region than the South central and should be moved over. Farm size; Small farm size projects should be more cooperative or rental type implementation for the acers they cover, Vers large scale operations are going to be implemented an a more single farm at a time basics and still cover substantially more acres. With the ability of sequestering far more carbon than several little acre operations. Having it hedged toward larger acers is a lot more bang for the public buck. – Will Bowdish

I wonder if you imagine “fair” is an equal distribution or is it a farm revenue or farm acreage weighted distribution.

What do you do if a region doesn't bring forward applications or the only application, they put forward is terrible?

Worry about a potential gaming situation where a CD corners the market and ensures they are the only applicant from the region and can apply for funds to do whatever they want irrespective of it being a cost-effective carbon reduction method recognizing they will win an award based solely on this geographic constraint – Greg Rock

Nothing in the legislative intent or RCW 89.08.620 authorized DEI as a prioritization component. This and reference to DEI prioritization in Section 5 should be removed. If the legislature would like to prioritize DEI in the future they can alter the legislation.

Why not the 6 CD areas? 10 areas seems cumbersome and not very workable. How about the NRCS Local Working Group areas? That way you could align with potential NRCS programs. As currently aligned it skews the program to areas with the least amount of farmland acreage.

This is an inaccurate statement. The legislation states “The commission shall attempt to achieve a geographically fair distribution of funds across a broad group of crop types, soil management practices, and farm sizes.” The current categorization of farm sizes skews funding towards small and medium sized farms compared to the acreage they represent (calculations below). There is much less benefit of carbon sequestration on 10 acres versus 1,000 acres which is the major goal of this legislation.

Suggest the following classification:
Small: 1 – 100 Acres - Represents 0.37% of farm acreage.
Medium: 101 – 1000 - Represents 1.9% of farm acreage.
Large: greater than 1001 - Represents 97.73% of farm acreage.
This still skews the distribution to small and medium farms but not nearly as bad as suggested.

– Mark Nielson

Not entirely sure what this means, but I have some concern about carving out funds for small, medium, and large, based on land-mass vs. equally (land-mass would result in a bigger
bucket of large farms, and a smaller bucket of small farms). Also, should consider that urban farms are often less than 5 acres, but these might not be high carbon sequestration projects anyways.

Also consider a specific amount of funds reserved for DEI. And how will that be factored into TA assistance, where the main applicant won't necessarily be BIPOC/veteran? – Nick Cusick

Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects
Concern: Creating a review committee of 5 agencies seems overly burdensome and is not required in statute beyond the coordination for program development and consultation for leveraging opportunities.

RCW 89.08.620 states:

“When prioritizing grant recipients, the commission, in consultation with the department of agriculture, Washington State University, the department of fish and wildlife, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money.”

This statement requires SCC to “seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money” by consulting with WSDA, WSU NRCS, WDFW. It does not require that the other entities are involved in the ranking process. These entities should review the practices being considered for funding and identify funding sources available through their programs that can be used to support proposed projects.

SFF Program topic: Project Prioritization
Concern: The ranking priorities in the legislation are not adequately represented in the draft guidelines. The proposed ranking system will result in reduced program success with respect to the legislatively identified intended outcomes.

RCW 89.08.620 legislates to prioritize projects based on a project’s ability to:
- Increase the quantity of organic carbon stored in soil
- Increase the quantity of organic carbon storing in aquatic soil
- Integrate vegetation into management of farms and ranches
- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions in or from soils
- Increase use of precision agriculture
- Benefits to fish habitat
- Benefits to pollinators

Other considerations identified in RCW 89.08.615 are:

“The commission shall attempt to achieve a geographically fair distribution of funds across a broad group of crop types, soil management practices and farm sizes.”

The proposed prioritization process far exceeds an “attempt to achieve” by requiring the defined base goals to be met and adding additional “factors that may be considered to prioritize applications”. The prioritization process should be clear without added confusion of what may or may not be considered. Additional factors such as DEI that the legislature did not identify as a ranking factor should not be added into the ranking system. The proposed ranking process will reduce program efficacy by driving program funds to projects that are less effective achieving program goals and thus risk the loss of future legislative funding of SFF.

The draft program language states that:
- “Grants must be fairly distributed statewide.”
- “Grants must be fairly distributed across a broad spectrum of crop types and commodities”
- “Grants must be fairly distributed across farm sizes.”

None of the above conditions are required by RCW. SCC is only required to make an attempt to spread the money across these different areas. The ranking criteria should be focused on the RCW’s identified prioritization factors. The other added factors could be tracked to identify
any user group that is being reached. If a specific region isn’t utilizing the program SCC could make inquiries about why not and provide education and outreach efforts to support the CDs in those regions. Similarly for commodities or farm size. An even distribution of funds across farm sizes would put 33% of funding into farms under 9 acres. This will result in a reduced program accomplishment and is counter to the legislative intent. The program should be accessible to all farm sizes, but awards should go to the projects that will accomplish the most return on investment. A program that funds precision agriculture on a 9 acre farm rather than a 900 acre farm simply to accomplish distribution across farm sizes will greatly underperform program goals due to lost opportunity of scale. Please don’t lock this program into an even distribution across farm sizes when not required to.

Similarly with geographic distribution. Rather than require equal distribution across arbitrary regional boundaries SCC can monitor the distribution of funds. Each year a heat map of projects funded through SFF could be created to identify regions where the program is not utilized. SCC could subsequently make inquiries and provide support to attempt to achieve even geographic distribution. This is a preferred approach relative to requiring the funding be distributed evenly throughout the state. Do not add prioritization criteria that aren’t present in the RCW as adopted. A project should be vetted based on its ability to accomplish the goals of the funding. Ranking based on DEI could result in funding a first-time farmer’s project over a project that would sequester more carbon but is being implemented by an established producer. This program is about carbon footprint not the individual implementing the project. – Loren Meager

Section 6: Reporting and the SFF Measurement and Estimation Verification System (MEV)

Section 6 – Comments received

Please allow the use of the OFoot (Organic Farming Footprints) Tool Developed at Washington State University for diversified farm operations.

https://ofoot.cafltar.org/ - April Thatcher

What funding and support will be available for monitoring?
• If awarded for first five years WaCSE will be used to estimate benefit, but will be ground truthed by soil samples. Those who commit to long term carbon storage will have more monitoring by WaSHI or third party verifiers.
• How will the inherent variability of the climate benefit of many practices such as no-till or cover-cropping be accounted for over time?
• What carbon monitoring will be recommended?
• We would recommend that any carbon monitoring relating to biochar be done by soil tests measuring total organic carbon pre and post-application, with tests done 1 month and
12 months after addition. This would then track the carbon added through the biochar, as well as the subsequent stabilization of organic matter and labile carbon. – Angie Shephard

Data collection is crucial for all projects. Business owners should be given tools and/or funding for data collection to help inform the implementation of more practices and legislation moving forward. If the SCC will be collecting the data, they must be given adequate time and funding to do so well. – Hailey Lampe

Will the program fund the soil samples to ground-truth COMET carbon sequestration estimates, or another entity such as WSDA?

Will SCC, WSDA, WSU, NRCS, or the WaSHI provide regular trainings to use the tools listed in Section 6, including in-person soil sampling protocols?

What attributes will be listed for program participants in the “public list of projects and pertinent information”? For example, will project location and participants name be listed? – Ryan Williams

Make it clear that all entities WSDA, WSU are not allowed access to property only the entity that made the agreement with the landowner. Other can access through the entity on the project agreement. Make sure the landowner is notified. Maybe the grant should have a standard landowner agreement. Other entities do not have the same respect for property rights districts do. – Dean Hallie

Don't penalize landowners if installed practices don't meet expected results. – Craig

"Landowners who receive SFF funding shall be asked to allow SCC, WSDA, WSU, and/or district staff access to the recipient’s property, with reasonable notice, to monitor the results of the funded projects. Monitoring could include collecting soil samples, which will be used to improve the Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system."

- This particular component of this grant will be so helpful to us in order to get quantifiable results that enacting Salmon-Safe BMPs. – Brian Muegge

I suggest adding metrics specific to the funded practice such as operation and maintenance are included in verification. Soil samples for carbon may be subject to external forces not controlled by the grant recipient such as flooding or drought. Also making it a little more clear what happens if a grant recipient stops using the equipment and or practice while still receiving payment. With the wide range of possible funding recipients language needs to be clear who is accountable and what the action or response is for non-compliance with funding conditions. – Bill Blake

Who will be responsible for collecting and analyzing soil samples for carbon sequestration estimates? Will samples be collected for every land management project?
Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments! – Tami Stubbs

Note these are the GWP associated with a 100 year study period (the one I would recommend) and a ton-year of CO2e storage would have 1/100th the value of avoiding a ton of CO2 under this study period
I know how COMET uses these values for avoided GHG emissions from reduced inputs – I'm not sure how it, or the WaCSE is handling increased carbon storage/sequestration. If it is modeling increased soil carbon levels based on practices that is great – but we may want to evaluate how it is applying a relative radiative forcing value to that carbon storage – which may warrant some slight modifications. Happy to chat with WSU or whomever is the most knowledgeable about how the WaCSE will quantify and create a relative CO2e value for increased carbon storage in soil, trees, etc. They may be looking at a 100 year “permanent” storage value and assuming absorbing 1 ton CO2 is equal to offsetting 1ton CO2e. But as many of these practices result in non-permanent Carbon storage sometimes only 10 years that may not be the most appropriate assumption, hence the 100 year storage equivalency method and ton-year accounting option. – Greg Rock

Section 6: Reporting and the SFF Measurement and Estimation Verification
Include training of local CD staff. – Loren Meager

The final subject of interest is the tracking aspect. We do see the need for local entity (CD’S) tracking both new and existing efforts on both private and public lands. We see the need to collect information that will allow more review than simply tons of constituent sequestered, and suggest that CD’s also track by land use, planned practices, cost for both cost shared and non-cost shared practices, along with the term of sequestration. A good database is key to monitor program efficiency, effectiveness, and to guide future refinements. – Cowlitz – Wahkiakum CDs
Sustainable Farms and Fields Grant Programmatic Guidelines

March 2022

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Grant Program

Program Overview:
The Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) grant program was established in statute during the 2020 legislative session with strong bipartisan support, and support from a wide range of stakeholders. The goal of the program is to increase the implementation of climate-smart practices to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent (greenhouse gases, GHG) emissions on farmland, rangeland, and tidelands in Washington through voluntary incentives. Not only do these practices help mitigate the global impacts of climate change, they increase resiliency to drought, flooding, and other environmental stressors related to climate change. The numerous co-benefits of these practices include improved air and water quality, and increased habitat for wildlife, pollinators, and fish. Implementation of precision agriculture can reduce fossil fuel consumption, further reducing GHG emissions. Moreover, these climate-smart practices help producers save money in their farming operations.

Legislative Intent:
The intent of the 2020 Sustainable Farms and Fields legislation: Findings—Intent—2020 c 351: "The legislature finds that Washington's working agricultural lands are essential to the economic and social well-being of our rural communities and to the state's overall environment and economy. The legislature further finds that different challenges and opportunities exist to expand the use of precision agriculture for different crops in the state by assisting farmers, ranchers, and aquaculturists in purchasing equipment and receiving technical assistance to reduce their operations' carbon footprint while ensuring that crops and soils receive exactly what they need for optimum health and productivity. Moreover, the legislature finds that opportunities exist to enhance soil health through carbon farming and regenerative agriculture by increasing soil organic carbon levels while ensuring appropriate carbon to nitrogen ratios, and storing carbon in standing trees, seaweed, and other vegetation. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to provide cost-sharing competitive grant opportunities to enable farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that increase appropriate quantities of carbon stored in and above their soil and to initiate or expand the use of precision agriculture on their farms. This act seeks to leverage and enhance existing state and federal cost-sharing programs for farm, ranch, and aquaculture operations."

Statutory Authority:
The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program is established under RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635.

Definitions:
Climate-smart practices: for the purpose of SFF, climate-smart practices are those practices used on agricultural land, rangeland, and tidelands that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester (store) carbon.
**Carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent emission:** a metric measure used to compare the emission impacts from various greenhouse gases based on their relative radiative forcing effect over a specified period of time compared to carbon dioxide emissions (RCW 89.08.610.) In other words, a carbon dioxide equivalent, or CO2eq, is a unit for measuring greenhouse gases. It allows for the comparison between diverse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

**Carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent impact:** a metric measure of the cumulative radiative forcing impacts of both carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and the radiative forcing benefits of carbon storage. (RCW 89.08.610). Having a beneficial CO2eq impact means reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestering carbon.

**Pollinator habitat:** an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department of agriculture.

Precision agriculture: “a management strategy that gathers, processes and analyzes temporal, spatial and individual data and combines it with other information to support management decisions according to estimated variability for improved resource use efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability and sustainability of agricultural production” (International Society of Precision Agriculture, ISPA). Climate-smart precision agriculture strategies are meant to reduce GHG emissions.

**Section 2: General Policies**

**SCC Grants and Contracts Policies**

Unless explicitly stated in these programmatic guidelines, recipients of SFF funding must follow policies and procedures established in the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.

**Eligible Applicants**

The Sustainable Farms and Fields program is open to conservation districts and other public entities that possess the expertise to provide technical assistance and/or capacity to implement climate-smart practices:

- Conservation districts
- State Agencies
- Colleges, universities, and extension offices
- Federally recognized Indian tribes
- Counties
- Cities, towns, and other municipalities
- Special purpose districts
Administration of the Sustainable Farms and Fields program (RCW 89.08.615)

Up to fifteen percent (15%) of funds may be used by the SCC to develop, or to consult or contract with private or public entities, such as universities or conservation districts, to develop:

- (a) An educational public awareness campaign and outreach about the sustainable farm and field program; or
- (b) The grant program, including the production of analytical tools, measurement estimation and verification (MEV) methods, cost-benefit measurements, and public reporting methods. Eligible costs associated with MEV development may include efforts led by WSDA for soil sampling and laboratory analysis, as well as data management and analysis.

No more than five percent (5%) of the funds may be used by the SCC to cover the program’s administrative costs.

The SCC shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other sources of money, such as state, nonstate, public, and private.

Application timeline and review process

The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant cycle begins at the beginning of each state fiscal year, in the month of July, and the deadline for the first round of applications is May 1 of each year. The SCC, in consultation with Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Washington State University (WSU), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) will review and select projects based on established prioritization metrics (see Section 5). The review committee will convene monthly to review and select funding applications until all funds have been expended during a fiscal year.

The applicant shall be notified if the application was not selected because it did not meet the SFF criteria.

General Requirements

All best management practices (BMPs) must meet NRCS conservation practice standards and specifications or an SCC-approved practice per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013. Implemented BMPs must be maintained for the duration of its estimated NRCS design lifespan.

All proposals must be entered into a Formstack application and contain a detailed description of projects and climate-smart practices, as well as estimated CO2 equivalent impact benefits using COMET Planner or a similar, SCC-approved model. Cost-share and annual payment projects that have been selected for funding must be entered into the SCC Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).

Applications should provide estimates of carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits (i.e., carbon sequestered and/or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced) that a proposed implementation project will deliver using COMET-Planner. WSDA’s Climate-Smart Estimator (WACSE) will help determine the most competitive practices in a given county.
Conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers that have been pre-identified in the application. For example, a district might submit one application to provide climate-smart technical assistance or to develop “carbon-lite plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) for farmers and ranchers who have already requested assistance.

Applicants can submit more than one proposal per fiscal year. For example, a conservation district may submit an application to provide, e.g., technical assistance or cover crop seed for multiple farmers as well as additional applications to implement climate-smart practices for individual farmers.

Additionally, multiple conservation districts and/or other public entities may partner to apply for funding to bundle innovative climate smart practices implemented on multiple farms or ranches at a larger or regional scale.

The maximum cost-share per landowner or operator per fiscal year is $100K unless a waiver is provided by the SCC Executive Director or delegate.

When setting cost-share rates, applicants are encouraged to consider the landowner or operator’s financial situation. If necessary, districts should create a separate cost-share resolution establishing a sliding scale based on landowner or operator income.

If the purchase of combustion engine-powered equipment is necessary to implement climate-smart practices in a cost-share project, the equipment must be new, or, if used, must have reasonably low mileage/hours, or be in good, working, serviceable condition. The goal is to replace older, high-emission combustion engine-powered equipment with equipment that emits lower emissions.

An overhead of up to twenty-five percent 25% is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked for applicants’ staff only. Overhead may not be charged by landowner or operators.

Districts applying for funds to operate an equipment-sharing program are strongly encouraged to have policies that establish a schedule of rental fees, and handling and inspection procedures that will be used for the loaning out and maintenance of the equipment. For any equipment to be shared among multiple districts, an inter-local agreement (ILA) managing the use of equipment is required. The FEMA equipment usage rates provides a good example.

An applicant may apply for funds to demonstrate the use of new or innovative climate-smart technologies and/or practices to local producers. Funds may pay up to 100% for such demonstrations on private or public land on a one-time basis.

Any applications involving lands leased from a state agency the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must include the department's approval in the application.

Work must be underway on all awarded SFF projects within 180 days of the funding allocation. Work may include technical assistance efforts or the actual implementation of BMPs.

Because SFF is funded through the state operating budget, which runs from July 1-June 30, all projects and practices must be completed no later than June 30 of each year. All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following the incurred expenditures.

No more than 20% of total annual SFF funds may be awarded to any single grant applicant.
Section 3: Fundable Projects

Allowable uses of Sustainable Farms and Fields grant funds include the following, based on RCW 89.08.615(6) and 89.08.615(9).

- **Technical assistance**: Including services to landowner or operators, such as the development of site-specific “carbon plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) to increase climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These practices include but are not limited to those that increase soil organic matter levels, increase usage of precision agricultural practices, and reduce livestock GHG emissions;
- **Purchase of supplies**: Including the purchase of seed, seedlings, spores, animal feed, and amendments for use in implementing climate-smart practices;
- **Equipment sharing**: Conservation districts, separately or jointly, may apply for grant funds to operate an equipment-sharing program. Conservation districts may also apply for grant funds on behalf of farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations coordinating as individual businesses or as formal cooperative ventures serving farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations to purchase shared equipment;
- **Cost-sharing**: For the implementation of climate-smart BMPs, including the purchase of equipment when necessary. Cost-share projects are eligible for costs associated with related technical assistance;
- **Annual payments**: To enrolled participants who have executed a contractual commitment with the SCC for verified carbon storage or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduction. No contract for carbon storage or changes to management practices may exceed twenty-five years. A program for annual carbon storage payments is under development and not part of the current funding opportunity at this time.;
- **Other equipment purchases or financial assistance**: As deemed appropriate by SCC to fulfill the intent of RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635, to be evaluated on a case by case basis.
Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices

Climate-smart practices include NRCS practice standards for greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon sequestration, and NRCS Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Practices for Fiscal Year 2022. The SCC may approve additional practices as deemed appropriate per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated as additions are made to the NRCS list of climate-smart CPS and SCC list of approved climate-smart practices.

Soil Health:

- Conservation Cover (CPS 327)
- Conservation Crop Rotation (CPS 328)
- Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till/Strip-Till/Direct Seed (CPS 329)
- Contour Buffer Strips (CPS 332)
- Cover Crop (CPS 340)
- Residue and Tillage Management – Reduced Till (CPS 345)
- Field Border (CPS 386)
- Filter Strips (CPS 393)
- Forage and Biomass Planting (CPS 512)
- Grassed Waterway (CPS 412)
- Mulching (CPS 484)
- Strip cropping (CPS 585)
- Vegetative Barriers (CPS 601)
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers (CPS 603)

Nitrogen Management:

- Nutrient Management (CPS 590), including
  - E590A
  - E590B
  - E590C
  - E590D

Livestock Partnership:

- Anaerobic Digester (CPS 366)
- Feed Management (CPS 592)
- Waste Separation Facility (CPS 632)
- Roofs and Covers (CPS 367)

Grazing and Pasture:

- Pasture and Hay Planting (CPS 512)
- Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528)
- Range Planting (CPS 550)

Agroforestry:

- Alley Cropping (CPS 311)
- Multi-story Cropping (CPS 379)
Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects

The SCC, in consultation with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW will prioritize grant applications based on the ability of the proposed projects to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. Other factors that may be considered to prioritize applications include but are not limited to: geographic distribution, commodity distribution, farm size, DEI, and creation of riparian or pollinator habitat to ensure that the SFF funds are implemented broadly and fairly.

The committee consisting of SCC, WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW staff will update the prioritization metrics used to select applications annually. The metrics will be posted online no later than March 1 of each year, beginning in calendar year 2023.

Prior to prioritization and selection, applications will be categorized by those seeking funding:

- for technical assistance only;
- to purchase materials and supplies for practice implementation (e.g., cover crop seed, plants, soil amendments, etc);
- for financial assistance through cost-sharing only;
- for a combination of technical and financial assistance;
- to purchase shared-use equipment.

Increasing carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits

Applications will be prioritized based on the ability to increase carbon sequestration and/or reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions through the following activities (RCW 89.08.620(2)):

(a) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in topsoil through practices including, but not limited to, cover cropping, no-till and minimum tillage conservation practices, crop rotations, manure application, biochar application, compost application, and changes in grazing management;

(b) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in aquatic soils;
(c) Intentionally integrate trees (i.e., agroforestry), shrubs, seaweed, or other vegetation into management of agricultural and aquacultural lands, with preference for native vegetation where practicable and appropriate;

(d) Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in or from soils;

(e) Reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management; and

(f) Increase usage of precision agricultural practices to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):
Projects that serve historically underserved farming communities including Black, indigenous, people of color, low-income, first-time, and veteran producers will be ranked higher.

Fish and Pollinator Habitat Creation:
Projects that create riparian buffers or other fish habitat enhancements, or that create pollinator forage/habitat will be receive higher prioritization. Conversely, projects that damage fish and wildlife habitat will be downgraded.

Partnerships:
Applications submitted by public entities will be ranked higher if they are partnering with their local conservation districts.

Section 6: Reporting and the SFF Measurement and Estimation Verification System (MEV)

The SCC consults regularly with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) to improve the SFF MEV system for estimating, measuring, and/or verifying sequestered carbon, and/or reductions in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.

For the first five years of the SFF grant program, the SCC anticipates using the WSDA Washington State Climate Smart Estimator (WaCSE) to estimate cumulative GHG emissions reduced and/or carbon sequestered. The WaCSE tool utilizes the COMET Planner dataset to estimate carbon sequestered and carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced by the implementation of climate-smart practices funded through SFF. The carbon equivalency metrics, or global warming potentials (GWPs), used in the COMET dataset were first published in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), and are consistent with methods used in the Inventory of United States Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks. Currently utilized GWPs ([IPCC 2021 AR6](https://www.ipcc.ch/) ) are as follows:

- 1 ton of CO2 = 1 ton CO2eq
- 1 ton of CH4 = 20.8 tons CO2eq (fossil origin) / 27.2 tons CO2eq (non fossil origin)
- 1 ton of N2O = 273 tons CO2eq
- 1 ton of C = 3.7 tons CO2eq
COMET estimates based on these carbon equivalency metrics in region- and practice-specific models will be used in the first five years of the SFF grant program. To ground-truth COMET carbon sequestration estimates, soil samples will be concurrently collected during the program. Soils data will be used to further develop robust MEV methodology. Where possible, program partners will evaluate and update practice-specific models used by the SFF program.

Participants who commit to contracted long-term carbon storage will be required to verify quantities of carbon sequestered through a more robust sampling methodology established by WSDA, WSU, the Washington State Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI), and/or third party verifiers where necessary or appropriate.

SCC, WSDA, WSU, and/or district staff will coordinate with the SFF applicant and, with reasonable notice to the recipient of SFF funding, monitor the results of the funded projects. Monitoring may include collecting soil samples, which will be used to improve the Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system.

The SCC shall maintain a public list of projects and pertinent information, to be updated annually. Data may include a summary of state and federal funds, private funds spent, landowner or operator and other private cost-share matching expenditures, the total number of projects, and an estimate of carbon sequestered or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced.

Landowner or operators who receive SFF funding will have the option to allow their business to be listed in the SCC’s public biennial SFF report.
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The Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) grant program was established in statute during the 2020 legislative session with strong bipartisan support, and support from a wide range of stakeholders. The goal of the program is to increase the implementation of climate-smart practices to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent (greenhouse gases, GHG) emissions on farmland, rangeland, and tidelands in Washington through voluntary incentives. Not only do these practices help mitigate the global impacts of climate change, they increase resiliency to drought, flooding, and other environmental stressors related to climate change. The numerous co-benefits of these practices include improved air and water quality, and increased habitat for wildlife, pollinators, and fish. Implementation of precision agriculture can reduce fossil fuel consumption, further reducing GHG emissions. Moreover, these climate-smart practices help producers save money in their farming operations.

Legislative Intent:
The intent of the 2020 Sustainable Farms and Fields legislation: Findings—Intent—2020 c 351: "The legislature finds that Washington's working agricultural lands are essential to the economic and social well-being of our rural communities and to the state's overall environment and economy. The legislature further finds that different challenges and opportunities exist to expand the use of precision agriculture for different crops in the state by assisting farmers, ranchers, and aquaculturists in purchasing equipment and receiving technical assistance to reduce their operations' carbon footprint while ensuring that crops and soils receive exactly what they need for optimum health and productivity. Moreover, the legislature finds that opportunities exist to enhance soil health through carbon farming and regenerative agriculture by increasing soil organic carbon levels while ensuring appropriate carbon to nitrogen ratios, and storing carbon in standing trees, seaweed, and other vegetation. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to provide cost-sharing competitive grant opportunities to enable farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that increase appropriate quantities of carbon stored in and above their soil and to initiate or expand the use of precision agriculture on their farms. This act seeks to leverage and enhance existing state and federal cost-sharing programs for farm, ranch, and aquaculture operations."

Statutory Authority:
The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program is established under RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635.

Definitions:
Climate-smart practices: for the purpose of SFF, climate-smart practices are those practices used on agricultural land, rangeland, and tidelands that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester (store) carbon.
**Carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent emission**: a metric measure used to compare the emission impacts from various greenhouse gases based on their relative radiative forcing effect over a specified period of time compared to carbon dioxide emissions (RCW 89.08.610.) In other words, A carbon dioxide equivalent, or CO2eq, is a unit for measuring greenhouse gases. It allows for the comparison between diverse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

**Carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent impact**: a metric measure of the cumulative radiative forcing impacts of both carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and the radiative forcing benefits of carbon storage. (RCW 89.08.610). Having a beneficial CO2eq impact means reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestering carbon."

**Pollinator habitat**: an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department of agriculture.

Precision agriculture: “a management strategy that gathers, processes and analyzes temporal, spatial and individual data and combines it with other information to support management decisions according to estimated variability for improved resource use efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability and sustainability of agricultural production” (International Society of Precision Agriculture, ISPA). Climate-smart precision agriculture strategies are meant to reduce GHG emissions.

**Section 2: General Policies**

**SCC Grants and Contracts Policies**

Unless explicitly stated in these programmatic guidelines, recipients of SFF funding must follow policies and procedures established in the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.

**Eligible Applicants**

The Sustainable Farms and Fields program is open to conservation districts and other public entities that possess the expertise to provide technical assistance and/or capacity to implement climate-smart practices:

- Conservation districts
- State Agencies
- Colleges, universities, and extension offices
- Federally recognized Indian tribes
- Counties
- Cities, towns, and other municipalities
- Special purpose districts
Administration of the Sustainable Farms and Fields program (RCW 89.08.615)

Up to fifteen percent (15%) of funds may be used by the SCC to develop, or to consult or contract with private or public entities, such as universities or conservation districts, to develop:

- (a) An educational public awareness campaign and outreach about the sustainable farm and field program; or
- (b) The grant program, including the production of analytical tools, measurement estimation and verification (MEV) methods, cost-benefit measurements, and public reporting methods. Eligible costs associated with MEV development may include efforts led by WSDA for soil sampling and laboratory analysis, as well as data management and analysis.

No more than five percent (5%) of the funds may be used by the SCC to cover the program’s administrative costs.

The SCC shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other sources of money, such as state, nonstate, public, and private.

Application timeline and review process

The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant cycle begins at the beginning of each state fiscal year, in the month of July, and the deadline for the first round of applications is May 1 of each year. The SCC, in consultation with Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Washington State University (WSU), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) will review and select projects based on established prioritization metrics (see Section 5). The review committee will convene monthly to review and select funding applications until all funds have been expended during a fiscal year.

The applicant shall be notified if the application was not selected because it did not meet the SFF criteria.

General Requirements

All best management practices (BMPs) must meet NRCS conservation practice standards and specifications or an SCC-approved practice per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013. Implemented BMPs must be maintained for the duration of its estimated NRCS design lifespan.

All proposals must be entered into a Formstack application and contain a detailed description of projects and climate-smart practices, as well as estimated CO2 equivalent impact benefits using COMET Planner or a similar, SCC-approved model. Cost-share and annual payment projects that have been selected for funding must be entered into the SCC Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).

Applications should provide estimates of carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits (i.e., carbon sequestered and/or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced) that a proposed implementation project will deliver using COMET-Planner. WSDA’s Climate-Smart Estimator (WACSE) will help determine the most competitive practices in a given county.
Conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers that have been pre-identified in the application. For example, a district might submit one application to provide climate-smart technical assistance or to develop “carbon-lite plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) for farmers and ranchers who have already requested assistance.

Applicants can submit more than one proposal per fiscal year. For example, a conservation district may submit an application to provide, e.g., technical assistance or cover crop seed for multiple farmers as well as additional applications to implement climate-smart practices for individual farmers.

Additionally, multiple conservation districts and/or other public entities may partner to apply for funding to bundle innovative climate smart practices implemented on multiple farms or ranches at a larger or regional scale.

The maximum cost-share per landowner or operator per fiscal year is $100K unless a waiver is provided by the SCC Executive Director or delegate.

When setting cost-share rates, applicants are encouraged to consider the landowner or operator’s financial situation. If necessary, districts should create a separate cost-share resolution establishing a sliding scale based on landowner or operator income.

If the purchase of combustion engine-powered equipment is necessary to implement climate-smart practices in a cost-share project, the equipment must be new, or, if used, must, have reasonably low mileage/hours, or be in good, working, serviceable condition. The goal is to replace older, high-emission combustion engine-powered equipment with equipment that emits lower emissions.

An overhead of up to twenty-five percent 25% is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked for applicants’ staff only. Overhead may not be charged by landowner or operators.

Districts applying for funds to operate an equipment-sharing program are strongly encouraged to have policies that establish a schedule of rental fees, and handling and inspection procedures that will be used for the loaning out and maintenance of the equipment. For any equipment to be shared among multiple districts, an inter-local agreement (ILA) managing the use of equipment is required. The FEMA equipment usage rates provides a good example.

An applicant may apply for funds to demonstrate the use of new or innovative climate-smart technologies and/or practices to local producers. Funds may pay up to 100% for such demonstrations on private or public land on a one-time basis.

Any applications involving lands leased from a state agency the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must include the department's approval in the application.

Work must be underway on all awarded SFF projects within 180 days of the funding allocation. Work may include technical assistance efforts or the actual implementation of BMPs.

Because SFF is funded through the state operating budget, which runs from July 1-June 30, all projects and practices must be completed no later than June 30 of each year. All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following the incurred expenditures.

No more than 20% of total annual SFF funds may be awarded to any single grant applicant.
Section 3: Fundable Projects

Allowable uses of Sustainable Farms and Fields grant funds include the following, based on RCW 89.08.615(6) and 89.08.615(9).

- **Technical assistance**: Including services to landowner or operators, such as the development of site-specific “carbon plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) to increase climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These practices include but are not limited to those that increase soil organic matter levels, increase usage of precision agricultural practices, and reduce livestock GHG emissions;
- **Purchase of supplies**: Including the purchase of seed, seedlings, spores, animal feed, and amendments for use in implementing climate-smart practices;
- **Equipment sharing**: Conservation districts, separately or jointly, may apply for grant funds to operate an equipment-sharing program. Conservation districts may also apply for grant funds on behalf of farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations coordinating as individual businesses or as formal cooperative ventures serving farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations to purchase shared equipment;
- **Cost-sharing**: For the implementation of climate-smart BMPs, including the purchase of equipment when necessary. Cost-share projects are eligible for costs associated with related technical assistance;
- **Annual payments**: To enrolled participants who have executed a contractual commitment with the SCC for verified carbon storage or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduction. No contract for carbon storage or changes to management practices may exceed twenty-five years. A program for annual carbon storage payments is under development and not part of the current funding opportunity at this time;
- **Other equipment purchases or financial assistance**: As deemed appropriate by SCC to fulfill the intent of RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635, to be evaluated on a case by case basis.
Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices

Climate-smart practices include NRCS practice standards for greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon sequestration, and NRCS Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Practices for Fiscal Year 2022. The SCC may approve additional practices as deemed appropriate per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated as additions are made to the NRCS list of climate-smart CPS and SCC list of approved climate-smart practices.

Soil Health:
- Conservation Cover (CPS 327)
- Conservation Crop Rotation (CPS 328)
- Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till/Strip-Till/Direct Seed (CPS 329)
- Contour Buffer Strips (CPS 332)
- Cover Crop (CPS 340)
- Residue and Tillage Management – Reduced Till (CPS 345)
- Field Border (CPS 386)
- Filter Strips (CPS 393)
- Forage and Biomass Planting (CPS 512)
- Grassed Waterway (CPS 412)
- Mulching (CPS 484)
- Strip cropping (CPS 585)
- Vegetative Barriers (CPS 601)
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers (CPS 603)

Nitrogen Management:
- Nutrient Management (CPS 590), including
  - E590A
  - E590B
  - E590C
  - E590D

Livestock Partnership:
- Anaerobic Digester (CPS 366)
- Feed Management (CPS 592)
- Waste Separation Facility (CPS 632)
- Roofs and Covers (CPS 367)

Grazing and Pasture:
- Pasture and Hay Planting (CPS 512)
- Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528)
- Range Planting (CPS 550)

Agroforestry:
- Alley Cropping (CPS 311)
- Multi-story Cropping (CPS 379)
• Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment \textit{and} Renovation (CPS 380)
• Silvopasture (CPS 381)
• Riparian Herbaceous Cover (CPS 390)
• Riparian Forest Buffer (CPS 391)
• Hedgerow Planting (CPS 422)
• Tree/Shrub Establishment (CPS 612)
• Windbelt/Shelterbelt Renovation (CPS 650)

**Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects**

The SCC, in consultation with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW will prioritize grant applications based on the ability of the proposed projects to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. Other factors that may be considered to prioritize applications include but are not limited to: geographic distribution, commodity distribution, farm size, DEI, and creation of riparian or pollinator habitat to ensure that the SFF funds are implemented broadly and fairly.

The committee consisting of SCC, WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW staff will update the prioritization metrics used to select applications annually. The metrics will be posted online no later than March 1 of each year, beginning in calendar year 2023.

Prior to prioritization and selection, applications will be categorized by those seeking funding:

- for technical assistance only;
- to purchase materials and supplies for practice implementation (e.g., cover crop seed, plants, soil amendments, etc);
- for financial assistance through cost-sharing only;
- for a combination of technical and financial assistance;
- to purchase shared-use equipment.

**Increasing carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits**

Applications will be prioritized based on the ability to increase carbon sequestration and/or reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions through the following activities (RCW 89.08.620(2)):

(a) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in topsoil through practices including, but not limited to, cover cropping, no-till and minimum tillage conservation practices, crop rotations, manure application, biochar application, compost application, and changes in grazing management;

(b) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in aquatic soils;
(c) Intentionally integrate trees (i.e., agroforestry), shrubs, seaweed, or other vegetation into management of agricultural and aquacultural lands, with preference for native vegetation where practicable and appropriate;

(d) Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in or from soils;

(e) Reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management; and

(f) Increase usage of precision agricultural practices to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):
Projects that serve historically underserved farming communities including Black, indigenous, people of color, low-income, first-time, and veteran producers will be ranked higher.

Fish and Pollinator Habitat Creation:
Projects that create riparian buffers or other fish habitat enhancements, or that create pollinator forage/habitat will be receive higher prioritization. Conversely, projects that damage fish and wildlife habitat will be downgraded.

Partnerships:
Applications submitted by public entities will be ranked higher if they are partnering with their local conservation districts.

Section 6: Reporting and the SFF Measurement and Estimation Verification System (MEV)

The SCC consults regularly with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) to improve the SFF MEV system for estimating, measuring, and/or verifying sequestered carbon, and/or reductions in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.

For the first five years of the SFF grant program, the SCC anticipates using the WSDA Washington State Climate Smart Estimator (WaCSE) to estimate cumulative GHG emissions reduced and/or carbon sequestered. The WaCSE tool utilizes the COMET Planner dataset to estimate carbon sequestered and carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced by the implementation of climate-smart practices funded through SFF. The carbon equivalency metrics, or global warming potentials (GWP), used in the COMET dataset were first published in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), and are consistent with methods used in the Inventory of United States Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks. Currently utilized GWP's (IPCC 2021 AR6) are as follows:

- 1 ton of CO2 = 1 ton CO2eq
- 1 ton of CH4 = 20.8 tons CO2eq (fossil origin) / 27.2 tons CO2eq (non fossil origin)
- 1 ton of N2O = 273 tons CO2eq
- 1 ton of C = 3.7 tons CO2eq
COMET estimates based on these carbon equivalency metrics in region- and practice-specific models will be used in the first five years of the SFF grant program. To ground-truth COMET carbon sequestration estimates, soil samples will be concurrently collected during the program. Soils data will be used to further develop robust MEV methodology. Where possible, program partners will evaluate and update practice-specific models used by the SFF program.

Participants who commit to contracted long-term carbon storage will be required to verify quantities of carbon sequestered through a more robust sampling methodology established by WSDA, WSU, the Washington State Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI), and/or third party verifiers where necessary or appropriate.

SCC, WSDA, WSU, and/or district staff will coordinate with the SFF applicant and, with reasonable notice to the recipient of SFF funding, monitor the results of the funded projects. Monitoring may include collecting soil samples, which will be used to improve the Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system.

The SCC shall maintain a public list of projects and pertinent information, to be updated annually. Data may include a summary of state and federal funds, private funds spent, landowner or operator and other private cost-share matching expenditures, the total number of projects, and an estimate of carbon sequestered or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced.

Landowner or operators who receive SFF funding will have the option to allow their business to be listed in the SCC’s public biennial SFF report.
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Laura Meyer, Communications Director
      Paige DeChambeau, Outreach and Engagement Manager

SUBJECT: Conservation Month

Background Summary
During the 2022 Legislative Session, HB 1652 was introduced that would have changed the date of all conservation elections to March along with creating a “Conservation Month” to promote conservation districts and the opportunity to vote. This was consistent with a recommendation made by the Joint Committee on Elections (JCE) for election reform.

While HB 1652 didn’t pass, the SCC communications team still believes that Conservation Month is a worthwhile endeavor and would like to pursue its creation in 2023. Funding is included in the proposed FY23 agency budget for Commission consideration to support this work.

Establishing “Conservation Month” directly aligns with our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan:
- Our values of Relationships, Knowledge, Respect, and DEI
- Our goals under several priority areas, including:
  - Conservation districts operate legally, transparently, accountably, and inclusively. (Governance and Accountability: Goal 4)
  - Conservation district boards are well supported to achieve their mission. (Governance and Accountability: Goal 5)
  - Strengthen awareness of natural resources’ value and conservation opportunities. (Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources: Goal 5)

Requested Action
None. Informational item only.
Conservation month proposal

The SCC communications team is developing a work plan to start the implementation of “Conservation Month,” which will be a way to shine the spotlight on conservation districts’ work in their communities and promote elections to spur better turnout statewide.

2022 Timeline

- **Spring** – develop a plan and budget for the work
- **Summer** – coordinate with conservation districts; create a contract and hire a creative firm to help with branding and ad buys
- **Fall** – develop the assets for the campaign and start light promotion during Orca-tober
- **Winter** – have all the assets (branding, ads, social media toolkits, etc.) ready and begin to work with the governor’s office to create a proclamation and media event

2023 Timeline

- **Session** – work on creating buzz and earned media while working with stakeholders and partners like TVW
- **Jan./Feb.** – start running digital/print/radio ads, advertise to stakeholders, and release toolkits
- **Mar.** – launch Conservation Month and advertise activities and run ads encouraging citizens to participate in the conservation district’s election processes
- **Spring** – debrief and start planning for the next cycle

Budget

The budget for this work will come out of the SCC communications budget. The plan is to spend $30,000 - $40,000 on Conservation Month in the first year. *(The “first year” means July 1, 2022 until March 2023.)*

The estimated budget breakdown would be as follows:

- **$15,000** on a creative contract that would help with the branding for the month, creating ads, and doing the ad buys in newspapers (printed and digital) and on the radio.
- **$12,000** on English and Spanish radio (the package includes ads promoted on the radio and their website.)
- **The rest of the money** would go towards staff time, handouts like stickers or seed packets, printing costs, and smaller targeted purchases.
- **Other areas to consider**: TVW sponsorships, podcasting, sponsoring events (ex: 5Ks, school and community gardens), and tabling at different events like farmers’ markets or conferences.

In the subsequent years, we would carry a similar balance moving forward. This would allow us to leverage the creative work already produced and build upon it. In the years following, SCC would be able to do larger advertisement buys, sponsorships, and events assuming funding levels remain similar.
Staff Contacts

- Laura Meyer, Communications Director, 360-701-9455, lmeyer@scc.wa.gov
- Paige DeChambeau, Outreach and Engagement Manager, 360-742-9488, pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Laura Meyer, Communications Director
      Paige DeChambeau, Outreach and Engagement Manager

SUBJECT: Communications Update – Success Stories

Summary:
The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) communications team has increased efforts to engage various targeted audiences with conservation districts and promote public benefits afforded by voluntary conservation programs. We’re leveraging multiple channels to reach targeted audiences — including elected officials, younger generations, and urban/suburban residents — as well as continuing to help conservation districts coordinate and enhance their own local communication efforts.

Requested Action:
None – information only.

Staff Contact:
Laura Meyer, SCC Communications Director (360-701-9455, lmeyer@scc.wa.gov)

Background and Discussion:

Washington Grown
The SCC continues a strong partnership with Washington Grown that allows us to promote conservation districts and our programs in videos, social media, and a new magazine.

- Video: The Washington Grown television program is entering its 10th season. For the past several years the SCC has paid Washington Grown to produce a short video segment (2-3 minutes) each year that highlights a conservation district success story and airs during an episode of Washington Grown. This allows us to bring CD stories to tens of thousands of households, primarily in urban/suburban areas. Recent video highlights include:
A video segment we paid to produce and features Benton CD’s work with an orchardist to improve irrigation efficiency aired during season 9 of Washington Grown this spring. Watch the segment here: https://vimeo.com/699057920

A season 8 episode that features the Stevens County Conservation District (SCCD) Forestry at Home education program is one of two Washington Grown episodes nominated for a Northwest Emmy. Here’s a link to the episode: https://youtu.be/8Fui0oy8Lbw (SCCD segment starts at 13:00).

Season 10 of Washington Grown will feature at least two CD stories. We’re paying to produce a segment about Columbia CD’s role in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), and producers are choosing to share another VSP story from Skagit CD.

- Social media: Episodes of Washington Grown air on YouTube and Facebook Live. On YouTube alone, the episode with the segment about Benton CD has been viewed nearly 1,000 times since March. The majority of online viewers are age 25-44.
- Magazine: Washington Grown received a Specialty Crop Block Grant that allows them to launch a new free magazine available in grocery store produce sections. They generously approached the SCC with an opportunity to provide regular articles featuring CDs. Outreach and Engagement Manager Paige DeChambeau wrote the first such article about a Skagit CD VSP participant that appears in the first issue this May. More articles are in the works.

**Biennial Report**

We published the 2019-21 Biennial Report online this spring: https://adobe.ly/3M7o0gv. We’ll receive hard copies soon, which we’ll share with CDs, partners, and elected officials.

**Social media**

We’ve increased social media efforts and have plans to expand our presence. We’re posting more on Facebook and making content more engaging, resulting in a 53 percent increase in reach in the past six months (compared to the previous six months). We plan to launch an Instagram account soon to further leverage content and our fantastic collection of conservation photos.

**Communications, Partnership, and Outreach (CPO) Committee**

The CPO Committee continues to go strong. We have retained longstanding members and added new ones. Current project ideas include developing a series of short videos with tips to help CDs capture effective conservation photos.

**Next Steps (if informational item):**

We’ll continue to keep Commissioners posted about our communication efforts through Friday Update entries and meeting presentations. Please get in touch if you have ideas or questions about our communication efforts!
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
  Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alison Halpern, Scientific Policy Advisor

SUBJECT: Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) Update

Action Item

Informational Item X

Summary:
Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) takes a Common Pool Resource (CPR) approach to resolve community-based conflicts related to natural resources. Stakeholders form local coalitions who, with the assistance of trained, neutral facilitators, make decisions by consensus that often result in innovative, collaborative solutions. The Washington State CRM consists of state and federal partners including SCC, WSDA, WDFW, WSU, DNR, ECY, WACD, NRCS, USFS, and BLM.

The CRM Task Group, chaired by SCC staff, has been working to better promote CRMS, despite time and resource limitations. The annual Executive meeting and tour to highlight the Black Wolf CRM had to be cancelled in 2020 and again in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative to the tour, the Task Group asked that interested Black Wolf CRM members create short videos of themselves talking about the CRM and its work. Thanks to Jim Huckabay, Dean Hallie, and a close friend of the Task Group Chair, a no-frills video was created.

Mike Kuttel Jr. has been working on a CRM storyboard in ArcGIS and has incorporated the Black Wolf CRM details into it, including the video. Mike will be provided a demonstration of the storyboard.

Requested Action:
None. Information only.

Staff Contact:
Alison Halpern, SCC Scientific Policy Advisor (ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556)
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator

SUBJECT: Update on the Voluntary Stewardship Program

Background Summary:
Staff provides an update on the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP).

Requested Action:
None. Informational item only.

VSP Update:
Commission staff continues to implement the VSP on behalf of the Commission. Two FTE’s and portions of five other FTEs make up the VSP staff. Their recent efforts include:

- Creating supplemental funding guidelines for the first time in program history to address the $3,000,000 in supplemental funding the legislature provided the Commission for VSP-related projects. After approval, a webinar to roll out the guidelines will be held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 9 am. The Zoom webinar link is: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81204458046?pwd=NFl2aGVvMlhvTEhTZDNNMEI4TTZydz09
  More information can be found on the Commission’s VSP web page.

- Created a sub-committee of SCC VSP staff to implement changes to the five year report template and database. Due to staff departure, the sub-committee’s work on IT issues related to the proposed changes has been delayed, but we hope to sort out those issues soon to resume work.

- Conducted our third quarterly VSP monitoring symposium on April 27, 2022, and are planning the next symposium. Symposiums are designed to provide education and outreach on monitoring to VSP implementers who must monitor the functions and values of critical areas in their counties.
- Adopted (anticipated to occur on May 12, 2022) a VSP Watershed Monitoring Project Development Guide for VSP implementers to use as a resource when planning for and conducting monitoring. The Guide will be available on the Commission’s VSP webpage.

- Held our fourth joint Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee VSP meeting. Each of these meetings includes an opportunity for three of the 27 VSP counties to meet with the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee. This opportunity provides a place for dialogue to occur between the county and the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee before the next five year report is due. So far Chelan, Thurston, Garfield, Benton, Kittitas, Cowlitz, Grant, San Juan, Asotin, Pacific, Okanogan and Mason counties have taken advantage of this opportunity.

- Revising the VSP Monthly newsletter to make it more user-friendly and easier to read.

**Background:**

All 27 VSP counties have approved Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) work plans (see map below).

All 27 counties are implementing their work plans. After approval of the plan, among other obligations, each county must meet a five-year reporting requirement. Each county’s five-year report is due five years after they receive initial funding in VSP. That means each county has their own unique five-year report deadline.

Thurston and Chelan counties, as VSP pilot counties, submitted their five-year review and evaluation reports in July 2019. The Commission used those reports to further drive the development of the five year report process, Monitoring Guide, template and database. The other 25 VSP counties submitted their five-year review and evaluation reports from Nov. 2020 through May 2021.
Due to when the county VSP work plans were approved, most have only had between 12-18 months of VSP implementation since approval, rather than a full five years.

The five-year reports are reviewed and evaluated by the VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee, and the Conservation Commission’s Executive Director must concur (or not) with the county watershed work group’s determination in the five-year report of whether the work plan’s protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks have been met. There is no definition of “review and evaluate” in the VSP statute.

The Commission created a *Five Year Report Guide* which supplements the statutory process and defines key terms (like “review and evaluate”) and adds other structures to the review and evaluation process (i.e. report content, how to submit the report, when to submit the report, how long the review will take, what will be reviewed, etc.). A five year report template and database were created in order to solicit from each county the information needed by the Director to make their decision.

The next five-year reports for Thurston and Chelan counties are due in Jul. 2024, with the rest of the counties due in either 2025 or 2026.

**Staff Contact:**
Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, 509-385-7512, [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov)
TO: Conservation Commission Members  
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director  
FROM: Jon K. Culp, Water Resources Program Manager  
SUBJECT: Drought Update

Summary:  
Drought Conditions continue in some areas of Eastern Washington. The state will revise drought declaration.  

Requested Action:  
None. Information only.  

Staff Contact:  
Jon Culp

Background and Discussion:  
Early winter snowpack/precip was looking promising through the first part of February, but dried substantially in March. This dry spell had much of the state showing well behind normal precip amounts for the wettest month in a typical water year. April showers not only brought in May flowers, it also recorded the second highest SWE (snow water equivalent) in recorded history. However, lingering precipitations deficits in the eastern 2/3rds of the state has not refilled soil moisture at depth. Because of this lack of precipitation to catch up, dryland and rangeland agriculture will likely see reduced production this season.  
The Office of the State Climatologist report that this summer will see drier and warmer conditions, as well.

While in some reservoir systems on the east slopes of the Cascades show promise, others will struggle to meet the demand for irrigation water this growing season. Yakima Basin Project upgraded to 100% TWSA (total water supply available) on May first. However, the Okanogan Irrigation District reported that they are short 13,500 acre feet of water for their 5000 acre service area. Lincoln County Conservation District reported a lack of refill on many stock water springs and ponds around the county. Other districts were reporting difficulty seeding and only shallow recharge of soil moisture in the April rains.
We will continue to monitor the situation while working with the Departments of Ecology and Agriculture to assist wherever we can.
May 19, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
    Christopher Pettit, Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: 2022 Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Report

Summary:
Commissioners, at the January 2022 meeting, approved the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) system with eight Standards including Accountability Standard 1 with requirements for use in 2022. The 15 Accountability Requirements (Standard 1) are based in law (RCW) and administrative code (WAC) for conservation districts. Completing or meeting 100% of these items is a threshold for receiving state funding through the Conservation Commission. The attached initial annual status report is submitted to Commissioners for their information at this time. A final CAPP status report will be provided in July 2022.

Staff Contact:
Shana Joy | sjoy@scc.wa.gov | 360-480-2078

Background and Discussion:
Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Conservation District Statuses:

Forty-five conservation districts are currently meeting the Accountability Standard 1 elements that can be evaluated at this time. For reference the Accountability Standard 1 elements are included below. These are status remarks around the accountability elements that Regional Managers are tracking:

Item 2. Eight conservation districts are currently working on updating their long range plans: Benton, Kitsap, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, South Yakima, Underwood, Whatcom, and Whidbey Island. It is anticipated that these will be completed during calendar year 2022, before the current plans expire.
Item 3. The current deadline for submitting annual work plans is May 30th. Regional Managers are actively assisting districts with annual planning and tracking submittals of plans.

Item 6. Pierce Conservation District is actively working to re-do their election. A hearing was held May 6th in Pierce County Superior Court with the goal of setting a new election date soon. See also the elections report from the SCC Elections Officer, Bill Eller.

Item 8. The Whitman Conservation District is undergoing an accountability audit as well as an investigation for potential fraud. This situation is closely monitored and once the audit and investigation reports are available, the Regional Manager will be working with this district on an action plan to address any identified issues. Some immediate steps have already been taken by the district to address issues as they came to light.

Item 11. The annual financial reporting to the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) is due May 30th by statute. Regional Managers are actively tracking the status of district reporting with the SAO. This year, the SAO is offering a new online tool for tracking the filing status of local governments, including conservation districts. Check out this link for further details and status of conservation district filing: Annual Filing Countdown.

Next Steps (if informational item):
A final CAPP report will be presented to the Commissioners at the July 21st meeting.
## STANDARD 1
**Compliance with Laws (required standard)**

Conservation Districts must fulfill their legal requirements as Political Subdivisions of the State of Washington and comply with all laws and the Washington Administrative Code. This evaluation is based on the best available information at the time it is conducted. **Date Evaluation Conducted:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance with Laws and Requirements</th>
<th>Citation (link to RCW or WAC)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Annual report of accomplishments was submitted on time, in the prescribed format to the Commission.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.070 (11)</td>
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<td>2. District Long Range Plan submitted on time &amp; meeting RCW and Commission requirements.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.220 (7)</td>
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<td>3. District Annual Work Plan submitted on time &amp; meeting RCW and Commission requirements.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.220 (7)</td>
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<td>4. The District has made a demonstrated effort to address their top resource needs identified in their Long Range Plan.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.220 (7)</td>
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<td>5. Upon request, District contracts and agreements have been submitted to the Commission.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.210</td>
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<td>6. Supervisor elections &amp; appointments are conducted according to RCW and WAC requirements. At least one District representative (ideally Elections Supervisor) has completed mandatory Elections Training provided by the Commission.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.190 &amp; 89.08.200 &amp; WAC 135-110.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Annual financial reporting to State Auditor’s Office completed correctly and on time.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.210</td>
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<td>8. All State Auditor identified issues (during SAO audits) have been resolved to the extent possible.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.070 (12)</td>
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<td>9. Open Public Meetings Act is followed including executive sessions.</td>
<td>RCW 42.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. State Public Records Act is followed.</td>
<td>RCW 42.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. All Board Supervisors and Public Records Officers are current on the required Open Public Meetings and Public Records Act Training.</td>
<td>RCW 42.30.210 &amp; 42.56.150</td>
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<td>12. Keeping public informed of Conservation District activities.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.220 (13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. State Ethics laws for public officials are being followed.</td>
<td>RCW 42.20 &amp; 42.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. District in compliance with terms of Commission/District Master Agreement.</td>
<td>RCW 89.08.070 (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Demonstrated diligence in complying with state and federal statutes such as: contracting, employment/labor laws, etc., through adoption of up-to-date policies, training, and use of available resources such as MRSC and Enduris.</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Standard 1 Ideas for Improvement:**

Conservation Commission Meeting  
May 18 & 19, 2022  
Page 144 of 178
TO: Conservation Commission Members
   Christopher Pettit, Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: District Operations and Regional Manager Report

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Report Summary:
Regional Managers offer this report of recent activities and support provided to conservation districts.

**Ongoing Service Areas to Conservation Districts**

- Partnering and Relationships Assistance
- **Conservation Accountability & Performance Program (CAPP) Assistance**
- New Supervisor and Staff Orientations and Professional Development
- **Task Order Development & Tracking**
- **Tracking Grant Spending and Vouchering**
- Open Government Training
- Cultural Resources
- Project Development & CPDS
- Natural Resource Investments & Shellfish Programs
- Implementation Monitoring
- **Long Range** and Annual Planning Assistance
- Cross-pollination of Information, Templates, and Examples
- Records Retention and PRA
- **CD Audits & Annual Financial Reporting**
- Chehalis Basin
- Commission Meeting Planning
- District Digest Publication
- Human Resources (law/rule updates, hiring, performance evaluations, compensation, healthcare, issues)
- **OPMA & Executive Sessions**
- Building Better Series

**Conservation District Service, Recent Topics**

- COVID 19 Operations
- Grants Reporting
- Hazard Mitigation Grant
- CD Property Ownership
Issues Resolution in Progress

- Personnel management: issues, turn-over, capacity gaps, transitions
- Inter-district relationships and partnering
- Grant vouchering requirements
- District governance
- Ethics
- Cash-flow

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

The RM team provides ongoing assistance with partnering or participated in partner and relationship building efforts with: individual conservation districts, WADE, PSCD Caucus, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, NRCS, Ecology, NASCA, WDFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor’s Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, and Arid Lands Initiative.

Work is ongoing now under two inter-agency agreements with the Department of Natural Resources on Forest Health Tracker, post-fire programming, and community wildfire resiliency work in the current fiscal year. The intent is to continue discussing our partnership, mutual goals, and roles and responsibilities to inform an MOU/MOA between the two agencies as a foundation for our future cooperation this spring. Shana Joy serves as our partner liaison to DNR and forest health/community wildfire resiliency subject matter lead at the SCC.

Local Working Group (LWG) meetings are nearly all complete with only one meeting remaining on the schedule for the Southwest Team.

SCC participation and partnership with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) in 2022 includes Shana Joy serving as Vice President of NASCA and Laura Meyer has joined the NASCA Board of Directors representing the Pacific Region. Shana and Laura also serve on various committees and represent NASCA in interactions with NACD as well.
**Western WA Flooding Response**

Josh Giuntoli continues to coordinate with SCC, CD, and NRCS staff on eligible EWPP projects in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties. Additionally, Jean Fike has been participating and coordinating with Whatcom Conservation District around implementation of FY22’s newly appropriated Agriculture Disaster Assistance funding and program guidelines.

**Wildfire Recovery**

Mike Baden, Allisa Carlson, and Courtney Woods are administering the wildfire recovery grant program by closely tracking the progress of funded cost-share projects and evaluating opportunities for completion of last-minute projects in this current fiscal year. This is operating funding and the first fiscal year’s funding expires on June 30, 2022. Additional funding will be available in FY23 for this work.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Implementation**

Mike Baden is leading implementation of a Hazard Mitigation Grant that the SCC is receiving from the Department of Emergency Management. All work under this grant has been completed with the exception of conservation districts ongoing work to conduct site assessments in 16 counties as a follow up to the trainings. We are planning for the work on this grant to conclude in the 2nd quarter of 2022.

**COVID 19 Response**

The Regional Manager team continues to monitor and review new information and guidance, and share it out to conservation districts as it is released from the Governor’s Office, CDC, and other sources.

**Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI)**

Allisa Carlson and Shana Joy are participating on a steering committee with WDFW and DNR staff to implement a shrubsteppe habitat wildfire recovery and resiliency budget proviso that was appropriated to WDFW this biennium. A solicitation for eligible projects in the areas of deferred grazing, wildlife friendly fencing and habitat restoration was released on February 14th for the burn footprints of Whitney, Pearl Hill and Cold Springs Fires that occurred in 2020. Foster Creek, Lincoln County, and Okanogan CDs are the first districts eligible to participate. Awards for FY22 have been distributed, funding 7 wildlife friendly fence, 6 virtual fence, 10 deferred grazing, and 2 habitat restoration projects; located throughout the three conservation districts listed above. Read more about virtual fencing. More information can be found online at: Shrubsteppe Fire Preparedness, Response and Restoration. The Governor has taken interest in the work of WSRRI, and paid a visit to the shrubsteppe on April 20th to learn more about this collaborative effort. Allisa was able to attend the meeting and represent SCC.

The long-term strategy advisory group (LTSAG) meets monthly to work on recommendations around long term wildfire resiliency in the shrubsteppe landscape with professional facilitators throughout the current biennium, finalizing the long term strategy by June 2023. The Foster Creek, Lincoln County, Benton, Franklin, North Yakima, and Okanogan CDs have engaged in the LTSAG. On May 5th, Allisa helped coordinate and facilitate a field tour in northern Douglas County for the LTSAG. There were 28 participants, including the steering committee reps from WDFW, SCC, and DNR; as well as advisory group members from Foster Creek CD, WA
Fire Chiefs, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Conservation Northwest, WA Fire Adapted Communities, NRCS, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and the strategy facilitators, Triangle Associates. The groups visited restoration projects on private and public properties, including riparian and upland native shrub/grass reestablishment projects.

**Chehalis Basin**

Josh Giuntoli, SW RM, represents the Executive Director of the Commission as ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board (CBB).

The Chehalis Basin Board has been receiving regular updates on the proposed flood retention expandable (FRE) facility which would provide temporary storage during major flooding events. Ecology recently reported to the board their anticipated timeline for completing the final SEPA EIS (FEIS) is early (Q1) 2023. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also provided an update on the NEPA FEIS. The anticipated date to finish the NEPA FEIS is late (Q4) 2022.

On the habitat side, the local conservation districts continue to be actively engaged in project development, project support and implementation. I had the opportunity to join other board members on a tour with Thurston CD to showcase their Skookumchuck Early Action Reach project on private property. One highlight was learning the CD through their VCC work crew planted over 30 thousand plants! To learn more about this project and other active and completed habitat projects, [check out this story-map](#).

The districts continue leading local regional implementation teams to identify habitat projects brought forward by partners for Aquatic Species Restoration Program (ASRP) funding consideration. The ASRP recently held a symposium and a highlight for me was the keynote from David Trout, natural resources director for the Nisqually Indian Tribe.
WSCC Center for Technical Development (CTD)  
May 2022 Commission Meeting

CTD Work Accomplishments (July 2021 forward)  
*For previous accomplishments and task completion, please review previous commission packet updates.*  
Explore more @ www.wactd.org

Certification

**CTD Planner Certifications:** The CTD Planner Certification Program accepts applications on a rolling basis through an online submission process. In FY21, the CTD was able to streamline the application process by moving to Smartsheet, allowing for a cleaner submission process for applicants and a more efficient review process for the review team. With a handful of planners now successfully certified, the CTD leadership team is currently exploring ways to increase participation. The CTD is developing a strategic plan including outreach efforts such as newsletter articles, informational webinars, and direct outreach to district managers to help identify and overcome barriers to completing certification.

The CTD is taking the first steps toward development on a Forest Planner Certification this winter, for anticipated release in 2022. The Forest Planner Certification will join Farm Planner, Dairy Planner, and Riparian Planner Certifications. The CTD will again rely on a diverse mix of conservation district and partner professionals from across the state to help develop the certification requirements.

**Plan Templates:** The CTD has enrolled assistance with creation of a Statewide Farm Planning template and helpful links to planning resources/tools. The template provides consistency in statewide planning as well as template availability to those Districts without such resources on hand.

**Planner Resources:** With ongoing changes and new hybrid (virtual and in-person) work environments, the CTD continues to curate and share virtual support tools and training opportunities on our webpage and via GovDelivery. Over the past two years, CTD has continually updated our planner resources on the CTD webpage, providing links to new opportunities and content for more effective remote working. The CTD Training Library helps district staff easily locate past webinars and training opportunities by topic. The Library is continually updated with new content.

**Connecting Community:** The CTD continues to build and host multiple Networking Forums for different planning disciplines and expertise. These Networking Forums have garnered good participation and interest from staff members. Currently the CTD hosts seven Forums: Cover Crop, Farm, Dairy, Riparian, Forestry, Plant Sale and Smartsheet. These Forums are held quarterly and provide a much-needed space for planners and technical staff to share successes and challenges, ask questions, and connect year-round. An email listserv function and a shared Google drive complement the forums and provide additional space for connection and sharing.
The “Building Better: Leadership and Management Learning Community” series hosted by the CTD in collaboration with WSCC, WADE, and WACD targets existing and developing District managers/leaders of all levels. The monthly learning and sharing network will take a summer hiatus and move to an every other month schedule beginning in September. A special session with Executive Director Chris Pettit will be held in May 2022. A full series agenda, as well as suggested learning resources and materials from individual sessions can be found on the CTD website.

CTD continues to actively solicit ideas for new Forums and Forum feedback and ideas for discussion are always encouraged, via embedded forms on the CTD website and through direct communication with Forum hosts. All Networking Forum information is available on the CTD website and promoted regularly through the monthly newsletter and special email announcements.

NRCS Planner Designations: The CTD continues to coordinate with NRCS to help District staff through the NRCS Planner Designation process, updating CTD materials to reflect changes, communicating to District staff through webinars and email announcements, and providing individualized assistance as needed. The CTD Training Plan Template and related materials are updated as changes occur. CTD’s coordination with NRCS is also part of the new Washington Conservation Planning Partnership plan, and the CTD is on-point to help District staff meet NRCS’s goal to certify as many planners as is applicable.

Training

NRCS Collaboration: Collaboration with NRCS training partners remains a top priority of the CTD. The CTD Training Coordinator position significantly increases the CTD’s reach and impact to help District staff through training, certification, and support processes. The Training Coordinator works in close communication with NRCS on coordination of individual training events to ensure better organization and placement of CD staff in NRCS trainings. Although NRCS approved and supported a 5-year cooperative agreement to share the cost of this highly needed position, funding has not yet been allocated by NRCS. An NACD grant is currently providing short-term support for the Training Coordinator while long-term funds are pursued.

National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP): The CTD participates in regular (bi-monthly) web-meetings of the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP) to discuss national training and certification opportunity for Districts. This has been a great forum for the CTD to both give and receive feedback and ideas for advancing these opportunities nationally and in Washington State. The CTD Training Coordinator participated in a sub-committee to provide specific recommendations on how to improve access to training for all potential conservation planners. The CTD also participated with NRCS Washington and other state partners to work on the Washington State Conservation Action Plan to improve training, certification, and communications.

Training Needs Inventory (TNI): The CTD releases its annual TNI in close coordination with NRCS in early summer each year, with the goal of informing NRCS of District training needs in the coming year. The TNI is tailored to identify those NRCS training events CD staff need and engage CD staff in the CTD and NRCS certification processes. This information also helps inform and guide CTD-sponsored trainings and Task Order requests. Additionally, the CTD participates in the NRCS EDC meetings to voice support.
for highly requested trainings. The CTD will again coordinate with NRCS on the timing and release of a 2022 TNI.

NRCS Training Events: The FY22 NRCS State Training Bulletin was released in late fall of 2021 and the CTD is actively coordinating District staff into trainings, prioritizing requests from the TNI survey.

Covid-19 continues to play a role in the delivery of training events. The CTD keeps in regular contact with NRCS and posts new information regarding training opportunities on the CTD website. The CTD continues to advocate with NRCS to consider/create more web-based training events into the future. Over the last year and a half, the CTD successfully partnered with NRCS to hold several key in-person courses in a hybrid format (virtual classroom followed by regional, small-group field days) and strongly advocates for this model as new courses are planned.

CTD recently hosted the week-long NRCS Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning (CNMP) training in a virtual format. This course followed the fall 2021 Nutrient Management Planning course, also hosted virtually by CTD. With NRCS training staff and coordination and hosting provided by CTD, these courses continue to showcase the achievements being made with CTD-NRCS partnership.

Core upcoming courses include:

- **Conservation Planning, Part 2**, which is a critical training for all planners, is identified in the FY22 NRCS State Training Bulletin and is currently in development, scheduled for Fall 2022.
- **Working Effectively With American Indians**, in development for early Fall 2022.

The CTD continues to strengthen their training partnership with NRCS and hopes that these web-based modular trainings will also serve as a pilot for ongoing collaboration with fully online and hybrid web-classroom training opportunities.

Other Training Events: The CTD is coordinating with SCC staff to provide Contracting and Procurement Training for district staff in FY23. Also in development are VSP Monitoring training opportunities.

The **CTD is coordinating with WADE again this year to provide technical track content and assistance in track coordination for the 2022 WADE Conference.** The CTD and WADE leadership teams are meeting regularly leading up to the conference which will be held June 13-15, 2022. The CTD will have multiple opportunities to connect and interact with staff, promoting CTD resources and will provide continued networking opportunities outside of the conference. The sessions will be live streamed to the extent possible for folks to participate virtually as well.

The CTD **continues to curate and host webinars** focused on timely topics. Although not a regular monthly series currently, the CTD remains responsive to requests and holds space each month to share information as needed. The webinars are advertised on the CTD website, newsletter, and through special email announcements. The CTD co-hosts additional outside virtual training opportunities through NRCS and other partners, as appropriate. The CTD is always soliciting input and ideas for both webinars and trainings through its newsletter and website.
With the increase in virtual presentations including webinars, training events, and meetings, the CTD continues to curate and provide content to support virtual presenters. This includes a tips handout, presenter orientation events/videos, and access to presentation training events. It is our goal to improve the quality of presentations to increase audience enjoyment and learning. The CTD promotes the virtual resources available and offers additional support for planning, creating, and hosting virtual events. A “Train the Trainer” course is in development for FY23 to further support the deliver of engaging trainings.

All the recorded webinars and trainings hosted by the CTD are now housed on the CTD website in the CTD Training Library. The Library is sorted by topic and includes a brief description, the recorded session, and links to any accompanying training materials. Additional content is added to the Library frequently.

Training Scholarships: Training scholarships remain a priority for the CTD. Scholarships may be requested at any time using an online form accessed via the CTD website. Scholarships are awarded on a rolling basis to support staff through FY22. CTD was able to award 20 scholarships in FY22 to a variety of planning, managerial, and education/outreach staff from across the state. These scholarships help support district staff time and registration fees to much-needed trainings. Regular reminders of the scholarship opportunity are communicated through the website and newsletter.

A new training scholarship opportunity was made available to districts in FY22. The Small Training Grant is offered to those districts or discipline groups who need support in bringing or hosting a training opportunity for district staff. 2 grants of $1000 each were awarded to support training for districts.

New Employee Resources: The new employee resource page on the CTD website is continuously being updated with new webinars and information, including a new employee check list for both individuals and Districts to use. The goal is to have all new employee resources in one place so they can get going with training, training plans, certification, and orientation. The new page includes a portal to the CTD database. The CTD is refocusing efforts this winter and early spring on developing a strategic plan to further refine our outreach and resources for new employees.

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**Communication and Outreach**

**Website:** The CTD website (www.wactd.org) continues to serve as a source of information to CD staff and is updated regularly. The CTD has worked to keep the website updated, improving aesthetics, clarity, and navigation of the site while continually updating content and ensuring relevance of the site. New changes are also announced in the CTD newsletter. In the coming months, the CTD will launch an effort to evaluate content on the website and make improvements to layout and navigation.

**Outreach:** CTD continues to work on a cohesive marketing plan to increase recognition and impact for CD staff as well as better engage both internal and external partners. Our goal is to increase awareness of the CTD as a central provision of training and expertise and increase the collaboration with partners on events and resources. The Partnership Engagement Plan will be completed by the end of FY22, and FY23 will focus on its implementation. The Plan will enable strategic communications and engagement with partners and others.
Newsletter: The CTD monthly GovDelivery newsletter continues to gain new subscribers (currently we have more than 500 subscribers). In addition to the monthly newsletter, the CTD is using the GovDelivery platform as a way to get immediate, time-sensitive news and information out to staff. The newsletter format will undergo an update in early FY23.

Special Projects: The CTD is working with the VSP group to provide training support and review of technical documents upon request. The goal is to provide quality assurance, technical support, and better connect VSP staff to CTD certification programs.

Technical Expertise and Science Program

Expertise: Experts are identified as needed for engagement in programs, policy and training around the state (examples include: Ecology Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture Advisory Group, DOE Drinking Water Standard review, Dairy Nutrient Advisory Committee, WDFW riparian habitat guidance, and more). The CTD database continues to prove effective in identifying and nominating expertise as appropriate.

Science: The CTD supports work around the State on Discovery Farms projects to advance the application of consistent science and monitoring efforts. There has been statewide buy-in to the DF program from partners and CDs continue to be involved in the national DF program through regular communications and annual meetings. Through this process, statewide QAPP and SOP’s have been developed with guidelines specific to projects, but which can be used in the future as templates for any CD.

Quality Assurance

The CTD still holds value of development of a statewide Quality Assurance program for individuals and Districts. While the CTD can offer quality assurance assessments and planning product review upon request, we do not have a dedicated program developer for this area of work at this time.

CTD Coordination

Database: The database (run under Caspio) provides assistance in locating staff expertise for engagement in workgroups and captures metrics on expertise and certifications. A self-service portal for employees is available on the CTD website which allows CD staff to update their personnel profiles, track completed trainings, and more. The CTD is currently working on updates to the Database to allow for better tracking of progress towards planner certifications and to ensure that those pursuing certification are contacted for the appropriate training opportunities.

Budget: Underwood CD now administers the budget and reporting monthly to the CTD. Billing guidelines and procedures ensure that work expectations match billing vouchers and that budgets are quickly updated on a monthly basis. The CTD is using Smartsheet to assist with budget and task tracking.
The CTD is working to create an annual (FY23) and long-range plan of work including metrics of success and short-term tasks and deliverables. The plan is housed in Smartsheet for regular review, reflection, and revision. The sheet also tracks Gantt chart timelines, budget, staff time, and deliverables for a cohesive and interactive management across all CTD members. **The draft FY23 budget and plan of work are available upon request.**

**Leadership:** The CTD Leadership Team held its annual meeting with WSCC Staff in May to provide a summary report of accomplishments over the last year, and to solicit feedback and input on priorities for the coming year. The upcoming budget request was shared along with the proposed FY23 Annual Plan of Work.

The CTD Leadership Team and partners (NRCS, WADE, WSCC) continue to meet monthly to ensure tasks are on track.

The CTD continues to prioritize **recruiting new members to both its leadership and working teams.** Several new task leads have recently joined the team to assist with training and event moderation, the development of the Mentoring Program, and assistance with the monthly CTD newsletter. New members represent both east- and west-side Districts, and the CTD continues to actively pursue representation from both sides of the state, and from both small and large districts.

**CTD Contact Information**

For more information on the CTD activities, please contact:
Jan Thomas, CTD Co-Chair / Training Coordinator | info@wactd.org

For more information, please visit: [www.wactd.org](http://www.wactd.org)
March/April 2022

The international theme for this year’s Earth Day was “Invest in Our Planet.” As our planet faces increasing threats from climate change, biodiversity loss, and habitat conversion, it’s more important than ever to preserve, protect, and perpetuate Washington’s fish and wildlife. At the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) our conservation efforts make a significant investment in the Earth and our natural heritage every day.

Thankfully we’re not alone in this work. The State Legislature made significant investments in the WDFW in the 2022 legislative session. From funding salmon recovery actions to combating invasive species to increasing capacity to operate and maintain WDFW-managed lands, we are grateful that the Legislature made appropriations to support our efforts. We view appropriations as assignments to do work, and funding these investments demonstrates the Legislature’s commitment to our mission and their collective confidence in our ability to deliver results.

WDFW’s mission is significantly broad, and we’ve got a long way to go to fully implement the agency’s mandate. For example, in 2015, the agency adopted the State Wildlife Action Plan which identifies 268 species of greatest conservation need. We estimate that we have 5 percent of the funding needed to fully implement the plan. We’re just one-twentieth of the way there! And if we aren’t successful now with efforts to keep common species common, those species could become imperiled, increasing the cost and effort to turn that situation around. The old adage that ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’ comes to mind when considering the financial wisdom of conserving biodiversity today, versus waiting until tomorrow.

Did you know that we have had the same Enforcement Officer staffing level since 1994, when the Departments of Fisheries and Wildlife merged? In the 1990s, the Enforcement Program had one officer per 30,000 residents; today there is only one officer for every 52,000 residents. With the increasing residential population, we’re seeing an increase in the variety and types of impacts to fish, wildlife, and habitat on state-managed lands and waterways. We are simply not able to keep pace with the enforcement presence that is needed to ensure the public’s safety and protect the fish and wildlife resources.

The Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office released their State of the Salmon report where they estimate that the broader salmon restoration community has 22 percent of the funding needed to recover salmon in Washington. While many smaller projects have
been implemented across the state, the salmon recovery community still does not have the resources and authorities needed to tackle some of the larger, more complex challenges that ultimately hinder recovery efforts.

This gap, in turn, limits another part of our mandate which is to provide sustainable opportunity. The constraining salmon stocks limit our ability to access healthier stocks or hatchery fish, and thus it is imperative that we continue to make meaningful progress on recovery and work diligently to avoid slipping further behind in our efforts to achieve our salmon recovery goals. There is no ‘easy button’ to return to the good ol’ days of salmon fishing; and if we’re not careful and provide a back-stop to the concerning trends, today’s constrained fisheries will be reflected on as the good ol’ days for future anglers.

I pledge to continue to seek the resources we need to fully implement WDFW’s mission. Our dedicated staff, the fish and wildlife resources, and Washington’s public deserve nothing less.

We had fun celebrating Earth Day this year—showcasing staff around the state on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, and I encourage you to view those posts. For our staff, please check out our WDFW Earth Day intranet page to get a glimpse at the work your colleagues are doing to conserve fish and wildlife.

I hope you have a great spring and that you find some time to get out to enjoy all that Washington has to offer.

Sincerely,

Kelly Susewind
WDFW Director

Topics in this message include:

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- Fish and Wildlife Commission updates, land acquisitions, and hunting seasons
- Annual Washington wolf population report shows growth in 2021
- Trout season ramps up after lowland lakes open, WDFW Derby underway
- New license year, spring turkey hunting, and Special Hunt applications
• Bears are emerging from dens: tips to reduce and prevent conflicts
• Saltwater opportunities aplenty: shellfish gathering, halibut openers, jetty fishing, and more
• Prescribed burning underway at State Wildlife Areas in Eastern Washington
• Next steps for 10-Year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands, public input sought on e-bikes
• New hope for salmon and steelhead passage on the Lewis River

Washington salmon seasons tentatively set for 2022-23

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fishery managers announced earlier this month that anglers in Washington can expect similar salmon fishing this year compared to 2021, with some improved opportunities in the ocean driven by strong expected coho returns. Information about these tentatively adopted fisheries is available on our Season summaries and agreed fisheries webpage. Negotiations between WDFW and co-managers this year were guided in part by a new Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan that has been submitted to federal regulators and is expected to provide long-term fishery guidance if approved. Season recommendations now move forward for approval by the National Marine Fisheries Service and final rulemaking, including additional opportunity for public comment and consideration of those comments.

Fish and Wildlife Commission updates, land acquisitions, and hunting seasons

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission made decisions on spring black bear rule-making, commercial shellfish rules, and elected Barbara Baker as Chair during its March 17-19 meeting. The Commission also unanimously approved three land transactions to enhance conservation and public recreation opportunities, including acquiring 1,035 acres of prairie-oak woodland and wetland habitat in Thurston County, 1,513 acres in Douglas County to protect and conserve shrubsteppe, and 94 acres in Pacific County to provide recreational access to more than 300 acres of tidelands. During its April 7-9 meeting, the Commission made decisions on 2022-2023 hunting seasons and approved acquiring a 94-acre property along the Chehalis River. The Commission approved most of the Department’s proposed recommendations for hunting seasons including landowner hunting permits, a variety of big game general seasons and special permits, migratory waterfowl seasons and
regulations, hunting equipment rule changes, and importation requirements for wildlife harvested from out of state due to chronic wasting disease. The 2022-23 Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet is now available online.

**Annual Washington wolf population report shows growth in 2021**

Washington’s wolf population continued to grow in 2021 for the 13th consecutive year. The Gray Wolf Conservation and Management 2021 Annual Report was released this month by WDFW and shows a 16 percent increase in wolf population growth from the previous count in 2020. As of Dec. 31, 2021, WDFW, partner agencies, and tribes counted 206 wolves in 33 packs in Washington. Nineteen of these were successful breeding pairs. This is up from 178 wolves in 29 packs and 16 breeding pairs in the 2020 count. Because this is a minimum count, the actual number of wolves in our state is higher. Since the first WDFW wolf survey in 2008, the state’s wolf population has grown by an average of 25 percent per year. The full report is available online. The Fish and Wildlife Commission also heard updates on wolf-livestock deterrence rule making during its April meeting, though no action was taken at this time.

**Trout season ramps up after lowland lakes open, WDFW Derby underway**

Ideal weather conditions and good fishing greeted trout anglers across Washington on April 23 for opening day of the lowland lakes fishing season. Creel reports are available online and anglers can expect decent fishing for weeks to come. “For the most part the weather cooperated around the state and there seemed to be a lot of happy anglers,” said Steve Caromile, WDFW’s Inland Fish Program Manager. “Some lakes were still in the low 40s, and others we’re in the middle of turnover, neither of which is great for fishing,” noted Caromile. “Catch rates should be improving over the next few weeks.” WDFW’s 2022 Trout Derby also began on opening day. Anglers can catch tagged trout in lakes across Washington, each of which comes with a prize. There are more than 800 prizes available in 2022, with a total value of over $37,000. The derby runs through Oct. 31, 2022. Visit WDFWderby.com to see lakes containing tagged fish or to redeem a tag for prizes. Over 16 million trout and kokanee were planted across Washington in the past year; check WDFW’s website to see which lakes have been stocked in recent weeks or to find a stocked lake near you.
New license year, spring turkey hunting, and Special Hunt applications

Washington hunters and anglers are reminded that a new license year began April 1! Hunting, fishing, and shellfish licenses can be purchased online, by calling 360-902-2464, or from hundreds of authorized dealers around the state. More information and details on license packages are available at myWDFW.com. The spring wild turkey season began April 15 and runs through May 31 statewide. More information on turkey season is in the 2022 Spring Wild Turkey Hunting Regulation Pamphlet. WDFW’s Hunter Education and Marketing teams partnered with the First Hunt Foundation and National Wild Turkey Foundation to offer a First Turkey Program, including “Turkey Camp” near Kettle Falls. First Turkey Certificates and information on the Washington Turkey Slam are available online. Through May 19, hunters may also submit special hunt applications 2022 deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep, and fall turkey permits. Special hunt permits offer a chance to participate in a unique hunt while directly supporting conservation and management in Washington.

Bears are emerging from dens: tips to reduce and prevent conflicts

Black bears have begun to emerge from their winter dens hungry and in search of calories. During this time of increased activity, WDFW is asking for your help to secure un-natural food sources to reduce bear encounters—especially around your home or while on the trail. Read our recent blog for tips to prevent conflicts. When black bears emerge, natural foods may be scarce, and they often look for the easiest source of food, which may include garbage, bird feeders, and fruit trees. We know people can be tempted to feed bears or tolerate them feeding on grasses and plants near dwellings, but you should never attempt to provide food for black bears or allow them to be comfortable around people.
Saltwater opportunities aplenty: shellfish gathering, halibut openers, jetty fishing, and more

WDFW Fish program and Enforcement staff have been busy this spring with saltwater opportunities aplenty now open. This is the time of the year when shellfish fanatics like to "shellibrate" a growing list of places to go in Puget Sound and Hood Canal, and a blog post with shellfish tips is available online. Halibut fishing opened April 7 in North Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands, and eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca—nearly a month earlier than recent years’ openers. “An earlier opening in the Puget Sound region builds on the input we’ve been hearing from stakeholders in recent years,” said Heather Hall, WDFW intergovernmental fisheries policy manager. "The earlier start and consecutive open days per week provide anglers with more opportunity to access the quota for that area," WDFW reminds anglers that barbless hooks are required in Marine Areas 5 through 13, including for halibut. Don’t have a boat or want to save on gas? Jetty fishing on the Washington coast is a great way to bring home delicious bottomfish. We offer suggestions for a safe and fun outing fishing from the rocks in this blog. Visit the WDFW Weekender Report for more saltwater opportunities near you.

WDFW plans prescribed fires, dependent on conditions, on Eastern Washington wildlife areas

Annual prescribed fires on WDFW Wildlife Areas in Eastern Washington started in April. Prescribed fires, an important forest management practice, reduce the risk of future wildfires, decrease the severity of wildfires when they do happen, and improve habitat for wildlife. WDFW has two prescribed fire teams—including five full-time foresters and 18 burn team members—that conduct prescribed fires every spring and fall on public lands managed by WDFW statewide. With funding from the state’s 2021-2023 Capital Budget and grants, they will treat over a thousand acres of Eastern Washington wildlife areas with prescribed fire by the end of the 2022 spring season. More information is available in this news release. WDFW staff and partners also recently installed a new shooting range at the Swakane Wildlife Area, and conducted clean-ups at the Wenas Wildlife Area.
Next steps for the 10-Year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands, public input sought on e-bikes

After a 49-day public comment period this past winter, we are now working to incorporate public feedback on a draft 10-Year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands. More information is available in this update. We appreciate the individuals and organizations who took the time to provide comments on the draft strategy. Your input is valued and important! The purpose of the 10-Year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands is to improve visitor access and nature-based recreation experiences, while increasing protections for natural, cultural, and tribal resources on WDFW-managed lands. Also related to our wildlife areas and other state public lands, WDFW and the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are seeking public input on electric-assist bicycling, or e-biking, on WDFW and DNR-managed lands as part of a process directed by Senate Bill 5452, a bill that passed the state Legislature in 2021.

New hope for salmon and steelhead passage on the Lewis River

On March 15, PacifiCorp took a significant step toward restoring access to critical salmon habitat in Washington's Lewis River. After several years of dodging its responsibilities to tribes, and salmon and steelhead, PacifiCorp finally signaled its intent to build fish passage at Lewis River dams by the end of 2028. A coalition of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), along with American Rivers, Columbia Riverkeeper, and Trout Unlimited cautiously welcome PacifiCorp’s new course of action and view it as a critical step to recovering Endangered Species Act-listed fish in the Lewis River, an important tributary to the lower Columbia River. PacifiCorp operates three dams on the North Fork Lewis River. For more than 80 years, these dams have blocked fish passage to over 100 miles of quality salmon and steelhead habitat. Thanks to the tireless advocacy of the tribes, WDFW, and non-governmental organizations, fish passage is back on the table.
Milestone
achieved!

By Roylene Comes At Night
NRCS-WA State Conservationist

I want to brag a little bit about my team here in Washington as they are just a solid group of hard working and incredible people. More than a year ago I challenged them to a goal – to increase the number of applications we receive to 1,000 within the next three years. They did so in under a year! I am pretty sure they will never fully understand how much I appreciate and respect the amount of work it took all of them to achieve this incredible milestone. We’ve never seen these many applications during my entire tenure as the state conservationist,

that’s more than 16 years!

These are not just numbers though. These are families, moms, dads, sons and daughters, all interested in conserving their resources and turning to us for assistance. We take this responsibility to them and our environment really seriously. So, the more folks who apply, the more folks we’re able to help, and the more we’re able to help the land. We’re talking the very core of what we do here, and my team has done an exceptional job!

Then, there’s the long-term organizational impacts that are associated with these application numbers. The more folks apply, means the more folks we are able to assist, results in more conservation dollars we’re able to secure, which increases the amount of money we have to operate. The more money we have available to operate, means we’ll be able to afford to hire more people to support all of you and farm families across the state. It’s a snowball effect, and I really believe we’ve started the ball rolling.

Only time will tell though, but we are going to keep pushing on that ball! In the meantime, Keith Griswold, my Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, sat down with my Public Affairs staff for an interview recently. The resulting article goes more into the numbers and specifics of this milestone and is available here, at the end of the Partner Activity Report.

By the way, I am REALLY looking forward to seeing you all in person during the tour and at the meeting here in Spokane! It’s so refreshing to seeing people again and visiting producers. Great things are ahead, and I can’t wait to experience it all with you!
Conservationist Updates

West Area

By David Rose
West Area Conservationist

Staff Actions:

- We currently have openings for Resource Conservationist (RC) in Bremerton and Puyallup.
- We have made a selection for the RC position in Olympia. HR is responsible for the next steps.
- Sarah Tanuvasa, Northwest Team District Conservationist (DC), is at basic training and then advanced training with the Air Force. She will be gone for several months. We are very proud of her commitment to serve her country. Josh Hall, current RC in Lake Stevens, will be acting DC to serve throughout most of Sarah’s absence.

Program Update:

Current situation for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has the West Area working toward obligating 123 of the 157 high priority applications received, accounting for over $3.5 million. So far we’ve obligated 15 contracts for nearly $800,000.

Projects: Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) project brief, Grays Harbor County

Heavy rainfall events in Western Washington during January 2022 resulted in two 100-year flood events within a 10-day period in some area of Grays Harbor County. For one homeowner, this resulted in a significant erosion event at Middle Fork Wildcat Creek, a small tributary to the Chehalis River, located 17 miles west of Olympia. The streambank at an oxbow eroded a distance of approximately 40 feet toward the existing residence. After flood waters receded, a 15’-20’ vertical cut streambank was created which threatens life and property as the residence, now within 50 feet of the edge of an unstable streambank.

NRCS State Design Engineer, Joe Lange led the effort to prepare the damage assessment report with assistance from local field and area staff. The EWPP project was approved for funding in March. Washington State Conservation Commission is the project sponsor and Grays Harbor Conservation District will assist the sponsor with permitting and implementation. Project implementation is tentatively scheduled to begin July 2022 when the fish work window opens mid-summer.

View north of streambank and adjacent residence. Joe Lange is surveying.

View south of the streambank with green house foundation adjacent. Melissa Shadwick pictured is surveying.

View east of streambank and adjacent property.
Central Area

By Austin Shero
Central Area Conservationist

Conservation Districts (CDs) across the Central Area have held their annual Local Working Group (LWG) meetings for the year with the Big Bend Team holding theirs in late February, the North Central Team holding theirs in March and the South Central Team held theirs in mid April. A statewide Tribal Local Working Group is scheduled in the coming weeks.

“We’re excited and optimistic for the opportunity to fund more high quality conservation”

Each LWG had great discussion between producers, agencies, and partners. I very much support our LWGs and the opportunities they create. It is an amazing relationship we have with CDs, partners and producers, and one I’m happy to continue to invest heavily in. I can’t imagine where we would be without this partnership!

Partners and agencies continue to build their efforts in the Odessa Aquifer area. This group has been working for over a decade, I’m told, but is getting significant traction to address irrigation water quantity issues in the area. It is exciting to see the collaborative work being done between local, state, and federal officials, as well as the local producers and partner groups. NRCS-WA is happy to work with this group to solve major resource concerns on an area wide basis.

The NRCS Central Area is working through their first wave of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract obligations for Fiscal Year 2022. As a state we’ve requested additional funds from our headquarters. We’re excited and optimistic for the opportunity to fund more high quality conservation.

As an agency, we are transitioning back to in person work over the next few weeks. It’s been a long couple of years fighting through a pandemic. I’m proud of our staff delivering high quality conservation despite the significant hurdles COVID-19 presented. Some offices have had very consistent NRCS staffers while others have had additional challenges due to the pandemic restrictions. We’re excited to continue working with producers and partners in a more traditional format again! I personally believe this will do nothing but strengthen our working relationships!

East Area

By Aubrey Hoxie
East Area Conservationist

Lincoln County Easement Collaboration

In 2002, the Inland Northwest Land Trust originally enrolled approximately 404 acres into the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) program, with Crab Creek running through the middle of it, it was later sold to the current landowner a few years later. Initial program priorities were to re-meander the stream using extensive engineering and excavation. Program priorities then shifted to taking the stream back to it’s original condition, as a braided channel and establish buffers along Crab Creek to provide shade on the creek.

In the beginning years, approximately 56,000 plants were planted along Crab Creek, with the objective of providing a riparian buffer, but
following a high-water year, most of the plants did not make it. Over the past 10 years, NRCS has worked jointly with the Lincoln County Conservation District in hiring work crews to help re-plant the trees and shrubs that were originally planted along the 5-mile stretch of stream. Lincoln County CD works with these crews providing technical quality assurance that plants are planted correctly, and in site-appropriate locations. Without the assistance from Lincoln CD, the work in this area would not happen as cost efficiently as it does.

In conjunction with the riparian buffers, the Partners for Wildlife program, with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has established approximately 12 Beaver Dam Analog structures (BDAs) within Crab Creek. These BDAs are used in slowing the water, restoring mesic habitat, and fish habitat within the stream.

Engineering

By Larry Johnson
State Conservation Engineer

East Columbia Basin Irrigation District – Odessa Subarea Special Study

NRCS-WA has received $783,000 through the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to begin the development of a watershed plan for the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) – Odessa Subarea Special Study (OSSS) area. Developing a watershed plan will consider alternatives described in the OSSS Environmental Impact Study (EIS) as well as other documents supporting the project. The watershed plan will outline alternatives to address agricultural water management and watershed protection of the Odessa Aquifer within the OSSS area. There is a federal, state, and private partnership which includes state level initiative and partnered program to limit depletion of the Odessa Aquifer. The partner’s concern is that further aquifer depletion will cause severe economic and environmental consequences. The project is limited to replacing ground water supplies (water from the Odessa Aquifer) with water from the Columbia Basin Project surface water supply system.

Western Washington January Floods – Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Back-to-back heavy rainfall events the end of December 2021 and beginning of January 2022 resulted in significant flooding throughout Western Mason County.
Washington State. NRCS has evaluated multiple project sites for Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) eligibly. Two locations have been determined to be eligible for assistance through the EWPP. Floodwater at these two locations have caused accelerated streambank erosion and is threatening to cause catastrophic failure of homes if the problem is not addressed. NRCS-WA has received $240,000 to construct streambank protection projects to remove the eminent threat to life and property.

NRCS-WA will be entering into an agreement with the Washington State Conservation Commission to implement projects that will effectively remove the threat to life and property. One of the projects is located in Mason County and the other is in Grays Harbor County. The overall objective of both projects is to eliminate the lateral migration of the stream channel that are endangering homes. This will be accomplished by constructing a rock rip rap toe, woody debris and vegetative practices.

Tribal

By Robin Slate
State Tribal Liaison

The USDA Office of Tribal Relations held consultations with Tribes nationally for all titles of the Farm Bill as follow-up to last year’s meetings. Many Tribes participated and had great questions and interaction with USDA officials.

NRCS-WA is planning to hold Working Effectively with American Indians training. One specifically for the Risk Management Agency and the other training will be a combination of NRCS, Washington Association of Conservation Districts, WSCC, and possibly other state agency staff. Once a host Tribe is identified, dates will be determined. This class will meet the requirements for certified planning certificates.

NRCS-WA is excited to welcome a 1994 Tribal Scholars recipient, Joey Billyboy. She’s Anishinaabe, of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Tribe, and is Awasii “Bullhead” clan on her grandfather’s side. Joey and her family will be arriving in Washington from Wisconsin, in late May. Joey will attend classes to finish her bachelors degree at Northwest Indian College on the Lummi reservation, and Western Washington University to become a soil conservationist for NRCS in 2023. Joey will be working with the Northwest Team in Everson Washington.
Local Work Groups are Underway

By Nick Vira
Partnerships Liaison

Local Work Groups (LWGs) are composed of agricultural producers, owners/operators of nonindustrial private forest land, professionals representing agricultural and natural resource interests, and individuals representing a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, wetland, plant, forestry, and wildlife sciences who are familiar with agricultural and natural resource issues in the local community. Currently, Washington has 10 LWGs and one tribal LWG for all tribes. There are two tribal district conservationists to serve the Colville Confederated Tribe and the Yakama Nation. LWGs provide annual recommendations on a variety of natural resource issues, to NRCS and the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

Local working group membership should be diverse and focus on agricultural interests and natural resource issues existing in the local community. Membership should include agricultural producers representing the variety of crops, livestock, and poultry raised within the local area; owners of nonindustrial private forest land, as appropriate; representatives of agricultural and environmental organizations; and representatives of governmental agencies carrying out agricultural and natural resource conservation programs and activities.

Membership of the LWG may include but is not limited to federal, state, county, tribal, or local government representatives. Examples of potential members include:
- NRCS designated conservationist
- Members of conservation district boards
- Members of the county Farm Service Agency (FSA) committee
- FSA county executive director or designee
- Cooperative extension
- State or local elected or appointed officials
- Other federal and state government representatives
- Representatives of American Indian Tribes

Individuals or groups wanting to become members of a LWG may submit a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials for becoming a member to the LWG chairperson and the NRCS district conservationist (or designated conservationist). The district conservationist (or designated conservationist) will assist the soil and water conservation district in making decisions concerning membership of the group.

LWG input and recommendations can assist USDA in identifying any of the following conditions:
- Identifying significant local and statewide geographic areas of concerns
- Identifying significant local and statewide natural resource concerns
- Technical programmatic recommendations
- Need for statewide public information and outreach campaigns
• Guidelines for developing ranking criteria for evaluating applications
• Guidance on eligible conservation practices
• Technical guidance on conservation practices, including new, innovative practices;
• Identifying, monitoring and analyzing performance indicators
• Evaluating and reporting program impacts on natural resources and the environment; and
• Coordinating with other federal, state, tribal, and local public and private activities

Many of the LWGs have already met this year and all should convene by June 10th. LWG schedules can be found here. LWG results will be summarized and reported to the NRCS STAC meeting on July 28th, 2022. Information for the July STAC meeting will be placed here on July 14th here.

By Bobby Evans
State Resource Conservationist

Several technological advances have recently been integrated to produce powerful mobile geospatial capabilities, optimized for conservation planning. Nationally, NRCS has long envisioned planners being able to perform evermore of their field work in the field using some near future technology. NRCS Bootcamp attendees from a decade ago may recall being issued heavy, ruggedized laptops, which converted to a tablet that could be used to complete a limited amount of routine work in years past; a far cry from modern mobile technology. NRCS Bootcamp attendees from a decade ago may recall being issued heavy, ruggedized laptops, which converted to a tablet that could be used to complete a limited amount of routine work in years past; a far cry from modern mobile technology. They were heavy, slow, and visibility was potentially a concern in direct sunlight. Concurrently, poor internet coverage was often cited as a limitation for the potential of tablets and laptops being effectively utilized in rural areas. Well, a lot has changed over the years.

Smartphones have been standard issue for our conservation planners. It’s well known how far these devices have advanced over the last 10+ years. These devices provide communication, internet, photos, email, GPS, bright colorful displays, and even safety for our planners. A growing contingent of tech savvy planners also use their smartphone’s GPS and network connectivity to access and record basic GPS information through ArcGIS Online, through applications such as Field Maps or more recently Collector.

However, the limitations of consumer grade GPS location services in smartphones were still an issue. No matter your smartphone manufacturing preference, these devices are limited to approximately 16’ accuracy under optimal conditions. Unfortunately, even on a clear day, this doesn’t meet the minimum for NRCS practice certification. However, GPS sensitivity can be enhanced by utilization of a specialized GPS receiver.

Roylene approved the purchase...
of 43 Trimble R1s to enhance the GPS capabilities of smartphones. The R1 has an advertised accuracy of 50cm (approximately 19.7”), which comfortably surpasses the level of accuracy appropriate for most all routine planning and certification purposes. Additionally, the R1 will help improve the accuracy of planning on landscapes as diverse as dense forest canopies to cramped urban settings.

Another obstacle that has been overcome was the protection our clients’ personally identifiable information. Even Common Land Unit (CLU) boundaries of our participants is classified as sensitive data. Storing this information in a cloud owned by a 3rd party vendor was an unacceptable risk. This last March, the NRCS Business Tools Coordinator began our transition away from ArcGIS online, eliminating the concern of 3rd party servers, which had prevented us from being able to upload sensitive data. This transformation was made possible by advancements in both NRCS Wi-Fi and as well as cell networks, providing enough bandwidth to allow access to geodata through a secure VPN.

Clearly, a lot has changed over the years regarding these technologies. Meanwhile, NRCS WA State Leadership has adopted and invested in opportunities and adapted to new challenges. The sum of these parts is truly much greater than their whole when considering potential impacts: access to better and more accurate geospatial information and newly introduced efficiencies. Perhaps the future is here, but it’s more likely that we’ve reached a new dawn.

Public Affairs

The future of information

By Nate Gallahan
State Public Affairs Specialist

Providing easy access to all of the information you need to make timely decisions regarding your resources is a huge priority for us. We also know that our current website does not do that and is in serious need of an overhaul. So, we’re doing it.

NRCS National Headquarters announced in late 2021 that they have contracted an agency to build our sites from scratch on a brand-new component management system named Drupal.

For as much pain as building this new site will be, we’re confident that the website of the future will be clean, easy to navigate, and be a great resource for Washington producers. It’s going to take time though. The new site will be live by Oct. 1. That date is quickly approaching, and to hit that deadline, we may end up having to make some difficult decision on what content to move now, and what content isn’t time critical and can be moved over later.

All in all, it is great news, and one we’ve dreamed about for a very long time.

We’re also looking forward to filling that new website with many more locally produced stories, photos, and videos. We know that all of you are doing some great work out there, and if you are willing to share those stories, or know of any others, please let us know. We would love to help share those successes, not just through our own storytelling, but by sharing those opportunities with local media as well. The goal here is to raise social awareness of the importance of conservation through impactful, meaningful, and local stories. We just need your help to find them! Feel free to reach out to me at nathan.gallahan@usda.gov with any story ideas or events that you think could use support from the Public Affairs team.
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<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>Apps</th>
<th>Contracts</th>
<th>Obligation/Awards</th>
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<td>CSP Classic</td>
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<td>3 application packets were incomplete, were determined ineligible and provided appeal rights. 2 applications were determined ineligible (FSA records, exceeded 67% NIPF) and provided appeal rights</td>
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<td>2 landowners selected for funding but requested cancellation, the other five did not rank high enough for funding.</td>
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NRCS News

NRCS-WA achieves 1,000 applications milestone

By Adrian Melendez
NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPokane VALLEY, Wash. – The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) recently marked a historic and important milestone after recording their 1,000th application in one fiscal year by the published program cutoff dates. This achievement is part of the organization's strategy to increase conservation services across the state and raise awareness of the numerous programs available to producers and landowners.

This is the first time Washington has received 1,000 applications and Keith Griswold, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, stressed that this wouldn’t have been possible without the hard work from everyone across the state.

Griswold said that receiving these applications are important to the overall conservation mission because it demonstrates the increasing voluntary conservation need for NRCS services in the Evergreen State.

“This demonstrates the need in this state to our national headquarters,” he said. “By showing this need we can request and receive the funding to increase our yearly allocation for additional conservation practices, addressing additional resource concern as well as salaries, additional staff, vehicles, and equipment.”

“It takes everyone across the board,” Griswold said. “It takes the work of people at headquarters to get the information out effectively to staff and the general public. It takes making sure, payment schedules are accurate, ranking questions are the web page is up to date to be able to answer questions, area office support, yet a majority of the work comes from our field staff, from district conservationists, conservation planners, program support specialist, to civil engineering and soil technician.”

While this is the first time NRCS-WA has had more than 1,000 applications in a fiscal year, Griswold said that this is an achievable milestone every year. NRCS state programs delivery plan and streamlined contracting needs to keep up this pace and effort every year.

“We need to continually bring in new clients,” he said. “We can work with our typical clients that we’ve worked with out in the field. We’ve worked with them for years, and they do a good job, yet we have the potential to assist historically underserved and urban clients needing conservation work too. We have an untapped clientele that’s available and waiting for our assistance.”

While there is a lot of work to be done, the NRCS-WA team can hold their heads high and be proud of the work they have put in to improve conservation and lives across the state.

Roylene Comes At Night, NRCS Washington State Conservationist, agrees that the hard work everyone did has led to the success in this effort and the increase in assistance NRCS is able to provide to landowners and producers.

“I want to congratulate everyone for your hard work dedication and commitment to helping NRCS-WA accomplish one piece of a larger strategy that will in the long run benefit producers and landowners to improve WA natural resources,” she said.
WASHINGTON, (April 28, 2022) – The deadline for partners to apply for the first round of funding through the new Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities is Friday, May 6, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. This funding pool includes large-scale proposals from $5 million to $100 million that emphasize the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production, and include direct, meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and/or historically underserved producers.

“Don’t miss out on this unique opportunity. These pilot projects will create and expand market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart practices,” said Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie. “We want a broad array of agriculture and forestry producers and landowners to see themselves in this effort.”

Applicants with proposals from $250,000 to $4,999,999 have until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, June 10, 2022, to apply for the second funding pool. These innovative pilot projects should place an emphasis on the enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a climate-smart commodity is defined as an agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon. Funding will be provided to partners through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation.

How to apply

The primary applicant must be an entity, not an individual. A range of public and private entities may apply, including:

• County, city or township governments
• Special district governments
• State governments
• Small businesses
• For profit organizations other than small businesses

• Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
• Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
• Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
• Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
• Private institutions of higher education, or
• Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education.
• Frequently asked questions are available on the website to help answer questions.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and is specifically seeking proposals from entities serving all types of producers, including small or historically underserved producers. Providing sufficient incentives to encourage producer participation and generating both verifiable greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestration benefits are critical to project success and will be considered in the evaluation criteria.

More information

USDA published a Request for Information offsite link image in September 2021 seeking public comment and input on design of this new initiative and used the nearly 400 comments received to inform this funding opportunity.

Visit usda.gov for additional information, including
details on Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation’s lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

President Biden, USDA announce $420 Million investment in watershed infrastructure projects to benefit rural and historically underserved communities

ALBANY, Ga. (April 21, 2022) – Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack was joined by White House Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu and Congressman Sanford Bishop (GA-2) to announce the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will invest $420 million in 132 infrastructure projects in 31 states, including rehabilitating dams, flood prevention, and watershed restoration projects. Today’s investments are funded by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and build on a $166 million investment announced earlier this year.

Secretary Vilsack and Mitch Landrieu made the announcement in Albany, Georgia, as part of the Building a Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour. There, NRCS is helping improve the flow of Radium Springs. Radium Springs does not flow consistently and is highly dependent on underground water. Funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) will be used to implement strategies that blend efficient irrigation methods with better resource management to ensure consistent flow to support agriculture, provide wildlife habitat, improve water quantity and quality, and improve the recreational value within the existing public park. Over $69 million will go towards eight projects that will provide relief for flood related watershed concerns.

“President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to...
rebuild our infrastructure, create good-paying jobs and build new economic opportunity,” Vilsack said. “Our watershed programs help communities rebuild after natural disasters and prepare for future events. This includes communities that we’ve historically underserved. The President believes we will grow the economy from the bottom up and middle out and this will occur in partnership with rural communities. That’s what Building A Better America is all about.”

Vilsack added: “The President believes that when rural communities thrive, America thrives. Building A Better America means that no community is left behind. These projects exemplify why this historic investment in our watersheds was needed and the adeptness of our agency to act swiftly.”

Today’s infrastructure announcement includes funding through two programs: the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program provides technical and financial assistance for new watershed infrastructure, and the Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB) upgrades existing USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) dams.

The Albany project is funded through WFPO. Additional examples of WFPO projects funded through the investment announced today include:

**East Columbia Basin Irrigation District - Odessa Groundwater Replacement Project –WA4**

Developing new plan will assist with agricultural water management and watershed protection in the Odessa Aquifer area. There is a federal, state, and private partnership which includes state level initiative and partnered program to limit depletion of the Odessa aquifer. The partner’s concern is that further aquifer depletion will cause severe economic and environmental consequences. The project was limited to replacing ground water supplies (water from the Odessa aquifer) with water from the Columbia Basin Project. As a replacement program, there would be no new irrigated land as the partners agreed to acre-for-acre ground water replacement only.

In total, NRCS received $918 million of BIL funding to allocate through its watershed programs. In addition to WFPO and REHAB, this includes funds for Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) to help communities recover from natural disasters. NRCS will continue to assist communities as it receives disaster requests.

A full list of projects is available on NRCS’ Bipartisan Infrastructure Law webpage.

**How communities can get help**

NRCS encourages communities to engage with their local project sponsors, participate in developing a sound conservation plan that serves to protect and preserve local watersheds, and connect with their local NRCS office to learn more about Watershed Program assistance.

NRCS will continue to review additional requests and compile a third round of BIL watershed funding as funds are available.
WASHINGTON, (March 10, 2022) — A new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report shows use of no-till, crop rotations, more efficient irrigation methods and advanced technologies have climbed in recent years.

The report from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) demonstrates progress made through voluntary conservation over a 10-year period. Findings from the report will inform future conservation strategies, including USDA’s efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

The “Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland: A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling” was developed by USDA’s Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). It found significant gains for soil health and soil carbon storage, while also identifying areas where additional and targeted nutrient management strategies are needed.

“This latest CEAP report shows that farmers have done an outstanding job over the years in using innovative conservation strategies that help mitigate climate change,” said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby, “But we have more work to do. Reports like this one help us better understand conservation approaches and make improvements to increase positive impacts. This report will help steer our conservation efforts well into the future to help us adapt to changing trends in production, climate and technology.”

Key findings include:

- Farmers increasingly adopted advanced technology, including enhanced-efficiency fertilizers and variable rate fertilization to improve efficiency, assist agricultural economies and benefit the environment.
- More efficient conservation tillage systems, particularly no-till, became the dominant form of tillage, improving soil health and reducing fuel use.
- Use of structural practices increased, largely in combination with conservation tillage as farmers increasingly integrated conservation treatments to gain efficiencies. Structural practices include terraces, filter and buffer strips, grassed waterways and field borders.
- Irrigation expanded in more humid areas, and as irrigators shifted to more efficient systems and improved water management strategies, per-acre water application rates decreased by 19% and withdrawals by 7 million-acre-feet.
- Nearly 70% of cultivated cropland had conservation crop rotations, and 28% had high-biomass conservation crop rotations.

Because of this increased conservation, the report estimates:

- Average annual water (sheet and rill) and wind erosion dropped by 70 million and 94 million tons, respectively, and edge-of-field sediment loss declined by 74 million tons.
- Nearly 26 million additional acres of cultivated cropland were gaining soil carbon, and carbon gains on all cultivated cropland increased by over 8.8 million tons per year.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus losses through surface runoff declined by 3% and 6%, respectively.
- Average annual fuel use dropped...
by 110 million gallons of diesel fuel equivalents, avoiding associated greenhouse gas emissions of nearly 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents.

**About the report**
For this report, farmer survey data was collected from 2003-2006 and again from 2013-2016. NRCS evaluates conservation practice adoption through the CEAP Cropland Assessment, using a combination of farmer surveys, land use and soils information, along with resource models. CEAP project findings are used to guide USDA conservation policy and program development, along with assisting conservationists, farmers and ranchers and other land stewards with making sound and science-based conservation decisions.

Download the full report or a four-page summary of findings.

**Next steps**
The report also revealed that cropping patterns have changed over the years in response to climate, policy, trade, renewable energy and prices, presenting a nutrient management challenge. Improving the timing and application method of nutrients can allow production demands to be met while reducing the impacts of crop production on the environment. NRCS plans to continue its focus on nutrient management conservation practices and strategies with vigorous outreach efforts to farmers and further engagement with partner groups to adjust to these changing trends.

**More information**
For more information on CEAP, visit the [CEAP webpage](#) or view this [multimedia story].

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation’s lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. On farmers.gov, you can [create a secure account](#), apply for NRCS programs, electronically sign documents and manage your conservation contracts.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](#).
**NACD 2022 Fly-in** virtual meetings with our congressional delegation (or staff) started on March 22, 2022. Commission staff, NRCS and WACD coordinated these meetings with WSCC executive director Pettit acting as emcee and others addressing specific subject matter. Ron Shultz laid out the basic process and Ryan Baye with help from Lori Gonzales arranged the meetings, with Roylene Comes at Night speaking for NRCS, and Tom Salzer representing WACD. We were fortunate that NACD president Michael Crowder (Benton CD) was able to represent NACD on most of the meetings. NACD priorities - [https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/issue-papers/](https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/issue-papers/)

Met virtually with representatives (district in parentheses): Strickland (10th), Kilmer (6th), DelBene (1st), Larsen (2nd), Schrier (8th), and staff for Jayapal (7th), Newhouse (4th), and Herrera Beutler (3rd). All were supportive.

**NACD 2022 Summer Conservation Forum and Tour** will be held July 16-19, 2022 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. [https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/summer-meeting/](https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/summer-meeting/) Registration is open.

**NACD Pacific Region meeting** - September 8 – 11, 2022 in Maui. More information to follow.

**NACD’s 2021 Annual Report** is available. [Click here](https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-report/) to review. Note on page 24 there is a short article on one of our Washington state Districts.

**Soil Health Champions Network** - If you or someone you know would like to join the NACD Soil Health Champions Network, please visit the [NACD website](https://www.nacdnet.org) or contact NACD North Central Region Representative Beth Mason, at beth-mason@nacdnet.org, for more information.

**NACD publications** are available [here](https://www.nacdnet.org/resources/publications/). You can subscribe to these digital newsletters: eResource, The Resource, Forestry Notes, and Conservation Clips. These are resources to stay abreast of issues relevant to conservation districts.

**NACD’s Natural Resources Policy Committee** met on April 19, 2022. Biggest items were:

- Policy Book Task Force Update - Larry Davis (Whatcom CD) provided a table delineating 2022 NACD policy book preliminary assignments for conducting policy reviews. The goal is to make the policy book more clear, less dated, and smaller.
- Chris Young, (NACD Government Affairs Director) and staff are meeting with appropriations committees. Request states/territories engage with their representatives who are on appropriations committees.

**NACD’s five Issue Papers** are [here](https://www.nacdnet.org/resources/issue-papers/).

**NACD’s Eleven 2022 Farm Bill Principles** are located [here](https://www.nacdnet.org/resources/farm-bill-principles/). (Information and links in 4/19/22 issue of eResource.)

- **PRINCIPLE 1:** The Locally-Led, Voluntary Incentive-Based Conservation Model Works
- **PRINCIPLE 2:** Increase Conservation Title Funding in the Farm Bill
- **PRINCIPLE 3:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- **PRINCIPLE 4:** Commitment to Working Lands
- **PRINCIPLE 5:** Technical Assistance and Conservation Planning are the Bedrock of the Conservation Model
- **PRINCIPLE 6:** Agricultural Operations Need to be Economically Viable
- **PRINCIPLE 7:** Climate Change
- **PRINCIPLE 8:** Farm Bill Education and Outreach is Necessary
- **PRINCIPLE 9:** Streamline and Simplify Conservation Programs/Application Process to Reduce Administrative Burdens
- **PRINCIPLE 10:** Forestry
- **PRINCIPLE 11:** New Approaches and New Technologies
23 April 2022

Washington State Conservation Commission

PO Box 47721

Olympia, Washington 98504-7721

Re: Election of a District Supervisor

Commission,

I write this to ask that the Commission will take another look at the potential fallout of having the election of a Conservation District Supervisor being placed on the General Ballot within our State.

I am quite certain that the discussion over the last few years has left many Conservation Districts that have local elections shaking their head over this issue, as nearly a complete majority have held valid elections for decades using the simple process that is allowed within each District.

Instead, now we as enter this next political season and the incoming Legislative session for 2023, it appears that we as a body of ground roots work and local control, are possibly going to be ushered out due to the squeaky wheel syndrome by only a very few (Two maybe?) Districts desiring to change the rules and have Supervisors be elected on the General Ballot.

Why are we trying to fix that which is not broken and instead, focus on the past successes of the current program?

Three Supervisors are duly elected on a One a Year basis, and Two Supervisors are placed on the CD Board from the Commission. This allows for local leaders in the District to run for office while, perhaps, holding another office within the District, providing leadership and direction, and quite possibly, able to intertwine towards a common goal.

Elections on the General Ballot preclude this from happening, as we can only run for one office at a time, and not for two or more. Most CD Supervisor elections take place away from this time frame and allows for a local person to run for the position. This may eliminate a large pool of candidates.

Cost to do a local election is a bargain by any look. Cost to go on a General Ballot runs into an increasingly more expensive adventure. For example: in Klickitat County, to run within a small fire district that is much smaller than the District, the cost based on the County Auditor report would be $2944. And if ran in the entire County, similar to the PUD election, which is larger than any CD locally, the amount is $7954. And Klickitat County is not a large population base. Imagine the cost of running a General Ballot election in the larger population centers. This takes away funding from what the real work is that Conservation Districts were formed for.

As for the Commission, which now certifies the local elections, would probably be out of business, as the County Auditor certifies the General Ballot elections and installs the new officers usually the first working day of the New Year; not in the middle of May as currently done by the Commission.

Sincerely,

Doug Miller

Doug Miller, Supervisor

Central Klickitat Conservation District